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Works of Jules Verne

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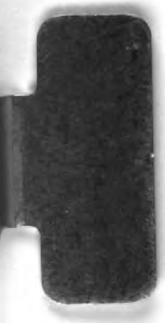

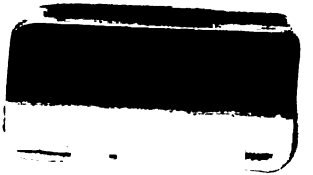

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THE AURORA AT THE SOUTHERN POLE.

Firstly, a few days after our departure from the land of the Sphinx, the sun set behind the western horizon to reappear no more for the whole winter. It was then in the midst of the semi-darkness of the austral night that the *Paracuta* pursued her monotonous course. True, the southern polar lights were frequently visible; but they were not the sun, that single orb of day which had illumined our horizons during the months of the Antarctic summer, and their capricious splendor could not replace his unchanging light. That long darkness of the poles shed a moral and physical influence on mortals which no one can elude, a gloomy and overwhelming impression almost impossible to resist.—Page 388.

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WORKS of JULES VERNE

EDITED BY

CHARLES F. HORNE, Ph.D.

Professor of English, College of the City of New York
Author of "The Technique of the Novel," etc.

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CONTENTS

Volume Fourteen

	PAGE
Introduction	1
Robur the Conqueror	3
The Master of the World	145
The Sphinx of Ice	263

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ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME FOURTEEN

	PAGE
THE AURORA AT THE SOUTHERN POLE	Frontispiece
THE ESCAPE FROM NIAGARA	224
AT THE BASE OF THE SPHINX	320

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INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME FOURTEEN

"ROBUR THE CONQUEROR" was issued in 1886, coincident with the earliest practical interest which began to stir the world in regard to the "conquest of the air." With his usual boldly scientific imagination Verne, having studied the question thoroughly from all sides, looked into the future, formed a judgment, and pictured the conquering air machine in the style he believed most likely to achieve success.

In his poetical climax Verne declares that Robur is "the spirit of the future"; and it is true that even to-day we can build no airship to match the "Albatross." We have, however, far outdistanced the historical account of aviation which Verne gives us in the course of his story, and which necessarily ceases with the early "eighties." The experiments of Professor Langley in Washington in 1896 started the world on toward a true knowledge of the laws of flight. Since then Professor Zeppelin and a dozen others in the "lighter than air" machines, and the Wright brothers and a hundred others in those "heavier than air," have achieved results which scarce any but Verne himself had even dreamed of, when he wrote "Robur the Conqueror."

The contest between the two schools, the lighter and heavier than air, is however by no means so completely decided as Verne assumes. While perhaps a majority side with him on this point to-day, yet many of our most expert scientists believe that the future lies with the dirigible balloon, rather than with the gliding plane. As for Verne's still more radically "heavy" ship, sustained aloft by the direct lift of her screws, nothing in the least practical has as yet been achieved in that line. On the contrary, it has been almost abandoned for the other more successful styles.

Nearly twenty years after writing "Robur," Jules Verne turned again to the same theme; and in 1905, the very year of his death, his faithful publishers, the Hetzels, issued "The Master of the World." This, as a sequel to "Robur the Conqueror" is here printed next to it. The sequel

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clearly evidences that the inventive power of the aged master and his skill in conceiving and portraying a dramatic climax remained unimpaired even to the end.

For the background of this story, Verne returns chiefly to the region of Lake Erie and Niagara, the tremendous cataract which had so impressed him on his visit to it nearly forty years before, and which he had described in "The Floating City."

As to the marvelous machine by which the Master of the World maintains his mastery, it is unlike Verne's earlier imaginative creations in that we are compelled sadly to admit that this last stupendous dream of the great romancer holds no appreciable possibility of ever being realized. Science is to-day as incredulous of the possibility of combining the lightness and superficial area of the airship with the weight and compactness of the submarine, as the supposed police of Washington show themselves in the story. Indeed, in reading it, one can scarce help sympathizing with these unfortunate detectives, brought by the author face to face with a practically impossible problem and summoned to solve it by the workaday laws of common sense.

"The Sphinx of Ice," the third story in the present volume, was published in 1897. Its interest to Americans is much enhanced by the fact that it builds itself upon, is in fact a sequel to, our own Edgar Allan Poe's celebrated tale "The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym." In the present issue for Americans the retelling of Poe's tale and the earlier pages of aimless wandering from one Antarctic island to another, have been considerably abridged.

The story itself, once it is fairly launched upon its theme of search and strife and icy mystery is well deserving of remembrance. As to the geography of the Antarctic Pole, however, Verne has been less happy than usual in his guesses. The daring expedition of Lieutenant Shackleton, who in 1909 reached within less than a hundred miles of the pole, seems to have established that there is no warmer region such as Verne here describes, no open sea, indeed no polar passage whatsoever. On the contrary, the Southern Pole is surrounded by an icebound continent of unknown extent, and lies upon a mountainous table-land probably ten thousand feet in height.

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Robur the Conqueror

OR

The Clipper of the Clouds

CHAPTER I

MYSTERIOUS SOUNDS

"BANG! Bang!"

The pistol shots were almost simultaneous. A cow peacefully grazing fifty yards away received one of the bullets in her back. She had nothing to do with the quarrel all the same.

Neither of the adversaries was hit.

Who were these two gentlemen? We do not know, although this would be an excellent opportunity to hand down their names to posterity. All we can say is that the elder was an Englishman and the younger an American, and both of them were old enough to know better.

So far as recording in what locality the inoffensive ruminant had just tasted her last tuft of herbage, nothing can be easier. It was on the left bank of Niagara, not far from the suspension bridge which joins the American to the Canadian bank three miles from the falls.

The Englishman stepped up to the American.

"I contend, nevertheless, that it was 'Rule Britannia!'"

"And I say it was 'Yankee Doodle!'" replied the young American.

The dispute was about to begin again when one of the seconds—doubtless in the interests of the milk trade—interposed.

"Suppose we say it was 'Rule Doodle' and 'Yankee Britannia,' and adjourn to breakfast?"

This compromise between the national airs of Great Britain and the United States was adopted to the general satisfaction. The Americans and Englishmen walked up the left bank of the Niagara on their way to Goat Island, the neutral ground between the falls. Let us leave them in the presence of the boiled eggs and traditional ham, and floods enough of tea to make the cataract jealous, and

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trouble ourselves no more about them. It is extremely unlikely that we shall again meet with them in this story.

Which was right; the Englishman or the American? It is not easy to say. Anyhow the duel shows how great was the excitement, not only in the new but also in the old world, with regard to an inexplicable phenomenon which for a month or more had driven everybody to distraction.

Never had the sky been so much looked at since the appearance of man on the terrestrial globe. The night before an aerial trumpet had blared its brazen notes through space immediately over that part of Canada between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. Some people had heard those notes as "Yankee Doodle," others had heard them as "Rule Britannia," and hence the quarrel between the Anglo-Saxons, which ended with the breakfast on Goat Island. Perhaps it was neither one nor the other of these patriotic tunes, but what was undoubted by all was that these extraordinary sounds had seemed to descend from the sky to the earth.

What could it be? Was it some exuberant aeronaut rejoicing on that sonorous instrument of which the Renommée makes such obstreperous use?

No! There was no balloon and there were no aeronauts. Some strange phenomenon had occurred in the higher zones of the atmosphere, a phenomenon of which neither the nature nor the cause could be explained. To-day it appeared over America; forty-eight hours afterwards it was over Europe; a week later it was in Asia over the Celestial Empire.

Hence in every country of the world—empire, kingdom, or republic—there was anxiety which it was important to allay. If you hear in your house strange and inexplicable noises, do you not at once endeavor to discover the cause? And if your search is in vain, do you not leave your house and take up your quarters in another? But in this case the house was the terrestrial globe! There are no means of leaving that house for the moon, or Mars, or Venus, or Jupiter, or any other planet of the solar system. And so of necessity we have to find out what it is that takes place, not in the infinite void, but within the atmospherical zones. In fact, if there is no air there is no noise, and as there was a noise—that famous trumpet, to wit—the phenomenon

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must occur in the air, the density of which invariably diminishes, and which does not extend for more than six miles round our spheroid.

Naturally the newspapers took up the question in their thousands, and treated it in every form, throwing on it both light and darkness, recording many things about it true or false, alarming and tranquillizing their readers—as the sale required—and almost driving ordinary people mad. At one blow party politics dropped unheeded—and the affairs of the world went on none the worse for it.

But what could this thing be? There was not an observatory that was not applied to. If an observatory could not give a satisfactory answer, what was the use of observatories? If astronomers, who doubled and tripled the stars a hundred thousand million miles away, could not explain a phenomenon occurring only a few miles off, what was the use of astronomers?

The observatory at Paris was very guarded in what it said. In the mathematical section they had not thought the statement worth noticing; in the meridional section they knew nothing about it; in the physical observatory they had not come across it; in the geodetic section they had had no observation; in the meteorological section there had been no record; in the calculating room they had had nothing to deal with. At any rate this confession was a frank one, and the same frankness characterized the replies from the observatory of Montsouris and the magnetic station in the park of St. Maur. The same respect for the truth distinguished the Bureau des Longitudes.

The provinces were slightly more affirmative. Perhaps in the night of the fifth and morning of the sixth of May there had appeared a flash of light of electrical origin which lasted about twenty seconds. At the Pic du Midi this light appeared between nine and ten in the evening. At the Meteorological Observatory on the Puy de Dome the light had been observed between one and two o'clock in the morning; at Mont Ventoux in Provence it had been seen between two and three o'clock; at Nice it had been noticed between three and four o'clock; while at the Semnoz Alps between Annecy, Le Bourget, and Le Léman, it had been detected just as the zenith was paling with the dawn.

Now it evidently would not do to disregard these ob-

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servations altogether. There could be no doubt that a light had been observed at different places, in succession, at intervals, during some hours. Hence, whether it had been produced from many centers in the terrestrial atmosphere, or from one center, it was plain that the light must have traveled at a speed of over one hundred and twenty miles an hour.

In the United Kingdom there was much perplexity. The observatories were not in agreement. Greenwich would not consent to the proposition of Oxford. They were agreed on one point, however, and that was: "It was nothing at all!"

But, said one, "It was an optical illusion!" While the other contended that, "It was an acoustical illusion!" And so they disputed. Something, however, was, it will be seen, common to both. "It was an illusion."

Between the observatory of Berlin and the observatory of Vienna the discussion threatened to end in international complications; but Russia, in the person of the director of the observatory at Pulkowa, showed that both were right. It all depended on the point of view from which they attacked the phenomenon, which, though impossible in theory, was possible in practice.

In Switzerland, at the observatory of Sautis in the canton of Appenzell, at the Righi, at the Gäbriss, in the passes of the St. Gothard, at the St. Bernard, at the Julier, at the Simplon, at Zurich, at Somblick in the Tyrolean Alps, there was a very strong disinclination to say anything about what nobody could prove—and that was nothing but reasonable.

But in Italy, at the meteorological stations on Vesuvius, on Etna in the old Casa Inglesi, at Monte Cavo, the observers made no hestitation in admitting the materiality of the phenomenon, particularly as they had seen it by day in the form of a small cloud of vapor, and by night in that of a shooting star. But of what it was they knew nothing.

Scientists began at last to tire of the mystery, while they continued to disagree about it, and even to frighten the lowly and the ignorant, who, thanks to one of the wisest laws of nature, have formed, form, and will form the immense majority of the world's inhabitants. Astronomers and meteorologists would soon have dropped the subject altogether had not, on the night of the 26th and 27th, the

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observatory of Kautokeino at Finmark, in Norway, and during the night of the 28th and 29th that of Isfjord at Spitzbergen—Norwegian one and Swedish the other—found themselves agreed in recording that in the center of an aurora borealis there had appeared a sort of huge bird, an aerial monster, whose structure they were unable to determine, but who, there was no doubt, was showering off from his body certain corpuscles which exploded like bombs.

In Europe not a doubt was thrown on this observation of the stations in Finmark and Spitzbergen. But what appeared the most phenomenal about it was that the Swedes and Norwegians could find themselves in agreement on any subject whatever.

There was a laugh at the asserted discovery in all the observatories of South America, in Brazil, Peru, and La Plata, and in those of Australia at Sydney, Adelaide, and Melbourne; and Australian laughter is very catching.

To sum up, only one chief of a meteorological station ventured on a decided answer to this question, notwithstanding the sarcasms that his solution provoked. This was a Chinaman, the director of the observatory at Zi-Ka-Wey which rises in the center of a vast plateau less than thirty miles from the sea, having an immense horizon and wonderfully pure atmosphere. "It is possible," said he, "that the object was an aviform apparatus—a flying machine!"

What nonsense!

But if the controversy was keen in the old world, we can imagine what it was like in that portion of the new of which the United States occupy so vast an area.

A Yankee, we know, does not waste time on the road. He takes the street that leads him straight to his end. And the observatories of the American Federation did not hesitate to do their best. If they did not hurl their objectives at each others' heads, it was because they would have had to put them back just when they most wanted to use them. In this much-disputed question the observatories of Washington in the District of Columbia, and Cambridge in Massachusetts, found themselves opposed by those of Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, and Ann Arbor in Michigan. The subject of their dispute was not the nature of the body observed, but the precise moment of its observa-

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tion. All of them claimed to have seen it the same night, the same hour, the same minute, the same second, although the trajectory of the mysterious voyager took it but a moderate height above the horizon. Now from Massachusetts to Michigan, from New Hampshire to Columbia, the distance is too great for this double observation, made at the same moment, to be considered possible.

Dudley at Albany, in the state of New York, and West Point, the military academy, showed that their colleagues were wrong by an elaborate calculation of the right ascension and declination of the aforesaid body.

But later on it was discovered that the observers had been deceived in the body, and that what they had seen was an aerolite. This aerolite could not be the object in question, for how could an aerolite blow a trumpet?

It was in vain that they tried to get rid of this trumpet as an acoustical illusion. The ears were no more deceived than the eyes. Something had assuredly been seen, and something had assuredly been heard. In the night of the 12th and 13th of May—a very dark night—the observers at Yale College, in the Sheffield Science School, had been able to take down a few bars of a musical phrase in D major, common time, which gave note for note, rhythm for rhythm, the chorus of the Chant du Départ.

"Good," said the Yankee wags. "There is a French band well up in the air."

"But to joke is not to answer." Thus said the observatory at Boston, founded by the Atlantic Iron Works Society, whose opinions in matters of astronomy and meteorology began to have much weight in the world of science.

Then there intervened the observatory at Cincinnati, founded in 1870, on Mount Lookout, thanks to the generosity of Mr. Kilgour, and known for its micrometrical measurements of double stars. Its director declared with the utmost good faith that there had certainly been something, that a traveling body had shown itself at very short periods at different points in the atmosphere, but what were the nature of this body, its dimensions, its speed, and its trajectory, it was impossible to say.

It was then that a journal whose publicity is immense—the *New York Herald*—received the anonymous contribution hereunder.

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"There will be in the recollection of most people the rivalry which existed a few years ago between the two heirs of the Begum of Ragginahra, the French doctor Sarrasin, in the city of Frankville, and the German engineer Schultze, in the city of Steeltown, both in the south of Oregon in the United States.

"It will not have been forgotten that, with the object of destroying Frankville, Herr Schultze launched a formidable engine, intended to beat down the town and annihilate it at a single blow.

"Still less will it be forgotten that this engine, whose initial velocity as it left the mouth of the monster cannon had been erroneously calculated, had flown off at a speed exceeding by sixteen times that of ordinary projectiles—or about four hundred and fifty miles an hour—that it did not fall to the ground, and that it passed into an aerolitic stage, so as to circle for ever round our globe.

"Why should not this be the body in question?"

Very ingenious, Mr. Correspondent of the *New York Herald!* but how about the trumpet? There was no trumpet in Herr Schultze's projectile!

So all the explanations explained nothing, and all the observers had observed in vain. There remained only the suggestion offered by the director of Zi-Ka-Wey. But the opinion of a Chinaman!

The discussion continued, and there was no sign of agreement. Then came a short period of rest. Some days elapsed without any object, aerolite or otherwise, being descried, and without any trumpet notes being heard in the atmosphere. The body then had fallen on some part of the globe where it had been difficult to trace it; in the sea, perhaps. Had it sunk in the depths of the Atlantic, the Pacific, or the Indian Ocean? What was to be said in this matter?

But then, between the 2nd and 9th of June, there came a new series of facts which could not possibly be explained by the unaided existence of a cosmic phenomenon.

In a week the Hamburgers at the top of St. Michael's Tower, the Turks on the highest minaret of St. Sophia, the Rouennais at the end of the metal spire of their cathedral, the Strasburgers at the summit of their minster, the Americans on the head of the Liberty statue at the entrance

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of the Hudson and on the Bunker Hill monument at Boston, the Chinese at the spike of the temple of the Four Hundred Genii at Canton, the Hindoos on the sixteenth terrace of the pyramid of the temple at Tanjore, the San Pietrini at the cross of St. Peter's at Rome, the English at the cross of St. Paul's in London, the Egyptians at the apex of the Great Pyramid of Ghizeh, the Parisians at the lightning conductor of the iron tower of the Exposition of 1889, a thousand feet high, all of them beheld a flag floating from some one of these inaccessible points.

And the flag was black, dotted with stars, and it bore a golden sun in its center.

CHAPTER II

AGREEMENT IMPOSSIBLE

"AND the first who says the contrary——"

"Indeed! But we will say the contrary so long as there is a place to say it in!"

"And in spite of your threats——"

"Mind what you are saying, Bat Fynn!"

"Mind what you are saying, Uncle Prudent!"

"I maintain that the screw ought to be behind!"

"And so do we! And so do we!" replied half a hundred voices confounded in one.

"No! It ought to be in front!" shouted Phil Evans.

"In front!" roared fifty other voices, with a vigor in no whit less remarkable.

"We shall never agree!"

"Never! Never!"

"Then what is the use of a dispute?"

"It is not a dispute! It is a discussion!"

One would not have thought so to listen to the taunts, objurgations, and vociferations which filled the lecture room for a good quarter of an hour.

The room was one of the largest in the Weldon Institute, the well-known club in Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U. S. A. The evening before there had been an election of a lamplighter, occasioning many public manifestations, noisy meetings, and even interchanges of blows, resulting in an effervescence which had not yet subsided,

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and which would account for some of the excitement just exhibited by the members of the Weldon Institute. For this was merely a meeting of balloonists, discussing the burning question of the direction of balloons.

In this great saloon there were struggling, pushing, gesticulating, shouting, arguing, disputing, a hundred balloonists, all with their hats on, under the authority of a president, assisted by a secretary and treasurer. They were not engineers by profession, but simply amateurs of all that appertained to aerostatics, and they were amateurs in a fury, and especially foes of those who would oppose to aerostats "apparatuses heavier than the air," flying machines, aerial ships, or what not. That these people might one day discover the method of guiding balloons is possible. There could be no doubt that their president had considerable difficulty in guiding them.

This president, well known in Philadelphia, was the famous Uncle Prudent, Prudent being his family name. There is nothing surprising in America in the qualificative uncle, for you can there be uncle without having either nephew or niece. There they speak of uncle as in other places they speak of father, though the father may have had no children.

Uncle Prudent was a personage of consideration, and in spite of his name was well known for his audacity. He was very rich, and that is no drawback even in the United States; and how could it be otherwise when he owned the greater part of the shares in Niagara Falls? A society of engineers had just been founded at Buffalo for working the cataract. It seemed to be an excellent speculation. The seven thousand five hundred cubic meters that pass over Niagara in a second would produce seven millions of horse-power. This enormous power, distributed amongst all the workshops within a radius of three hundred miles, would return an annual income of three hundred million dollars, of which the greater part would find its way into the pocket of Uncle Prudent. He was a bachelor, he lived quietly, and for his only servant had his valet Frycollin, who was hardly worthy of being the servant to so audacious a master.

Uncle Prudent was rich, and therefore he had friends, as was natural; but he also had enemies, although he was president of the club—among others all those who envied his

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position. Amongst his bitterest foes we may mention the secretary of the Weldon Institute.

This was Phil Evans, who was also very rich, being the manager of the Wheelton Watch Company, an important manufactory, which makes every day five hundred movements equal in every respect to the best Swiss workmanship. Phil Evans would have passed for one of the happiest men in the world, and even in the United States, if it had not been for Uncle Prudent. Like him he was in his forty-sixth year; like him of invariable health; like him of undoubted boldness. They were two men made to understand each other thoroughly, but they did not, for both were of extreme violence of character. Uncle Prudent was furiously hot; Phil Evans was abnormally cool.

And why had not Phil Evans been elected president of the club? The votes were exactly divided between Uncle Prudent and him. Twenty times there had been a scrutiny, and twenty times the majority had not declared for either one or the other. The position was embarrassing, and it might have lasted for the lifetime of the candidates.

One of the members of the club then proposed a way out of the difficulty. This was Jem Chip, the treasurer of the Weldon Institute. Chip was a confirmed vegetarian, a proscriber of all animal nourishment, of all fermented liquors, half a Mussulman, half a Brahman. On this occasion Jem Chip was supported by another member of the club, William T. Forbes, the manager of a large factory where they made glucose by treating rags with sulphuric acid. A man of good standing was this William T. Forbes, the father of two charming girls—Miss Dorothy, called Doll, and Miss Martha, called Mat, who gave the tone to the best society in Philadelphia.

It followed, then, on the proposition of Jem Chip, supported by William T. Forbes and others, that it was decided to elect the president "on the center point."

This mode of election can be applied in all cases when it is desired to elect the most worthy; and a number of Americans of high intelligence are already thinking of employing it in the nomination of the President of the Republic of the United States.

On two boards of perfect whiteness a black line is traced. The length of each of these lines is mathematically the

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same, for they have been determined with as much accuracy as the base of the first triangle in a trigonometrical survey. That done, the two boards were erected on the same day in the center of the conference room, and the two candidates, each armed with a fine needle, marched towards the board that had fallen to his lot. The man who planted his needle nearest the center of the line would be proclaimed President of the Weldon Institute.

The operation must be done at once—no guide marks or trial shots allowed; nothing but sureness of eye. The man must have a compass in his eye, as the saying goes; that was all.

Uncle Prudent stuck in his needle at the same moment as Phil Evans did his. Then there began the measurement to discover which of the two competitors had most nearly approached the center.

Wonderful! Such had been the precision of the shots that the measures gave no appreciable difference. If they were not exactly in the mathematical center of the line, the distance between the needles was so small as to be invisible to the naked eye.

The meeting was much embarrassed.

Fortunately one of the members, Truck Milnor, insisted that the measurements should be remade by means of a rule graduated by the micrometrical machine of M. Perreaux, which can divide a millimeter into fifteen hundred parts. This rule, dividing the fifteen-hundredths of a millimeter with a diamond splinter, was brought to bear on the lines, and on reading the divisions through a microscope the following were the results: Uncle Prudent had approached the center within less than six fifteen-hundredths of a millimeter. Phil Evans was within nine fifteen-hundredths.

And that is why Phil Evans was only secretary of the Weldon Institute, whereas Uncle Prudent was president. A difference of three fifteen-hundredths of a millimeter! And on account of it Phil Evans vowed against Uncle Prudent one of those hatreds which are none the less fierce for being latent.

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CHAPTER III

A VISITOR IS ANNOUNCED

THE many experiments made during this last quarter of the nineteenth century have given considerable impetus to the question of guidable balloons. The cars furnished with propellers attached in 1852 to the aerostats of the elongated form introduced by Henry Giffard, the machines of Dupuy de Lome in 1872, of the Tissandier brothers in 1883, and of Captains Krebs and Renard in 1884, yielded many important results. But if these machines, moving in a medium heavier than themselves, maneuvering under the propulsion of a screw, working at an angle to the direction of the wind, and even against the wind, to return to their point of departure, had been really "guidable," they had only succeeded under very favorable conditions. In large covered halls their success was perfect. In a calm atmosphere they did very well. In a light wind of five or six yards a second they still moved. But nothing practical had been obtained. Against a miller's wind—nine yards a second—the machines had remained almost stationary. Against a fresh breeze—eleven yards a second—they would have advanced backwards. In a storm—twenty-seven to thirty-three yards a second—they would have been blown about like a feather. In a hurricane—sixty yards a second—they would have run the risk of being dashed to pieces. And in one of those cyclones which exceed a hundred yards a second not a fragment of them would have been left. It remained, then, even after the striking experiments of Captains Krebs and Renard, that though guidable aerostats had gained a little speed, they could not be kept going in a moderate breeze. Hence the impossibility of making practical use of this mode of aerial locomotion.

With regard to the means employed to give the aerostat its motion a great deal of progress had been made. For the steam engines of Henry Giffard, and the muscular force of Dupuy de Lome, electric motors had gradually been substituted. The batteries of bichromate of potassium of the Tissandier brothers had given a speed of four yards a second. The dynamo-electric machines of Captains Krebs and Renard had developed a force of twelve horsepower and yielded a speed of six and a half yards per second.

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With regard to this motor, engineers and electricians had been approaching more and more to that desideratum which is known as a steam horse in a watch case. Gradually the results of the pile of which Captains Krebs and Renard had kept the secret had been surpassed, and aeronauts had become able to avail themselves of motors whose lightness increased at the same time as their power.

In this there was much to encourage those who believed in the utilization of guidable balloons. But yet how many good people there are who refuse to admit the possibility of such a thing! If the aerostat finds support in the air it belongs to the medium in which it moves; under such conditions, how can its mass, which offers so much resistance to the currents of the atmosphere, make its way against the wind?

In this struggle of the inventors after a light and powerful motor, the Americans had most nearly attained what they sought. A dynamo-electric apparatus, in which a new pile was employed the composition of which was still a mystery, had been bought from its inventor, a Boston chemist up to then unknown. Calculations made with the greatest care, diagrams drawn with the utmost exactitude, showed that by means of this apparatus driving a screw of given dimensions a displacement could be obtained of from twenty to twenty-two yards a second.

Now this was magnificent!

"And it is not dear," said Uncle Prudent, as he handed to the inventor in return for his formal receipt the last instalment of the hundred thousand paper dollars he had paid for his invention.

Immediately the Weldon Institute set to work. When there comes along a project of practical utility the money leaps nimbly enough from American pockets. The funds flowed in even without its being necessary to form a syndicate. Three hundred thousand dollars came into the club's account at the first appeal. The work began under the superintendence of the most celebrated aeronaut of the United States, Harry W. Tinder, immortalized by three of his ascents out of a thousand, one in which he rose to a height of twelve thousand yards, higher than Gay Lussac, Coxwell, Sivet, Crocé-Spinelli, Tissandier, Glaisher; another in which he had crossed America from New York to

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San Francisco, exceeding by many hundred leagues the journeys of Nadar, Godard, and others, to say nothing of that of John Wise, who accomplished eleven hundred and fifty miles from St. Louis to Jefferson county; the third, which ended in a frightful fall from fifteen hundred feet at the cost of a slight sprain in the right thumb, while the less fortunate Pilâtre de Rozier fell only seven hundred feet, and yet killed himself on the spot!

At the time this story begins the Weldon Institute had got their work well in hand. In the Turner yard at Philadelphia there reposed an enormous aerostat, whose strength had been tried by highly compressed air. It well merited the name of the monster balloon.

How large was Nadar's Géant? Six thousand cubic meters. How large was John Wise's balloon? Twenty thousand cubic meters. How large was the Giffard balloon at the 1878 Exhibition? Twenty-five thousand cubic meters. Compare these three aerostats with the aerial machine of the Weldon Institute, whose volume amounted to forty thousand cubic meters, and you will understand why Uncle Prudent and his colleagues were so justifiably proud of it.

This balloon not being destined for the exploration of the higher strata of the atmosphere, was not called the Excelsior, a name which is rather too much held in honor among the citizens of America. No! It was called, simply, the Go-ahead, and all it had to do was to justify its name by going ahead obediently to the wishes of its commander.

The dynamo-electric machine, according to the patent purchased by the Weldon Institute, was nearly ready. In less than six weeks the Go-ahead would start for its first cruise through space.

But, as we have seen, all the mechanical difficulties had not been overcome. Many evenings had been devoted to discussing, not the form of its screw nor its dimensions, but whether it ought to be put behind, as the Tissandier brothers had done, or before as Captains Krebs and Renard had done. It is unnecessary to add that the partisans of the two systems had almost come to blows. The group of "Beforists" were equaled in number by the group of "Behindists." Uncle Prudent, who ought to have given

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the casting vote—Uncle Prudent, brought up doubtless in the school of Professor Buridan—could not bring himself to decide.

Hence the impossibility of getting the screw into place. The dispute might last for some time, unless the government interfered. But in the United States the government meddles with private affairs as little as it possibly can. And it is right.

Things were in this state at this meeting on the 13th of June, which threatened to end in a riot—insults exchanged, fisticuffs succeeding the insults, cane thrashings succeeding the fisticuffs, revolver shots succeeding the cane thrashings—when at thirty-seven minutes past eight there occurred a diversion.

The porter of the Weldon Institute coolly and calmly, like a policeman amid the storm of the meeting, approached the presidential desk. On it he placed a card. He awaited the orders that Uncle Prudent found it convenient to give.

Uncle Prudent turned on the steam whistle, which did duty for the presidential bell, for even the Kremlin clock would have struck in vain! But the tumult slackened not.

Then the president removed his hat. Thanks to this extreme measure a semi-silence was obtained.

"A communication!" said Uncle Prudent, after taking a huge pinch from the snuff-box which never left him.

"Speak up!" answered eighty-nine voices, accidentally in agreement on this one point.

"A stranger, my dear colleagues, asks to be admitted to the meeting."

"Never!" replied every voice.

"He desires to prove to us, it would appear," continued Uncle Prudent, "that to believe in guiding balloons is to believe in the absurdest of Utopias!"

"Let him in! Let him in!"

"What is the name of this singular personage?" asked secretary Phil Evans.

"Robur," replied Uncle Prudent.

"Robur! Robur! Robur!" yelled the assembly. And the welcome accorded so quickly to the curious name was chiefly due to the Weldon Institute hoping to vent its exasperation on the head of him who bore it!

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CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH A NEW CHARACTER APPEARS

"CITIZENS of the United States! My name is Robur. I am worthy of the name! I am forty years old, although I look but thirty, and I have a constitution of iron, a healthy vigor that nothing can shake, a muscular strength that few can equal, and a digestion that would be thought first class even in an ostrich!"

They were listening! Yes! The riot was quelled at once by the totally unexpected fashion of the speech. Was this fellow a madman or a hoaxer? Whoever he was, he kept his audience in hand. There was not a whisper in the meeting in which but a few minutes ago the storm was in full fury.

And Robur looked the man he said he was. Of middle height and geometric breadth, his figure was a regular trapezium with the greatest of its parallel sides formed by the line of his shoulders. On this line attached by a robust neck there rose an enormous spheroidal head. The head of what animal did it resemble from the point of view of passional analogy? The head of a bull; but a bull with an intelligent face. Eyes which at the least opposition would glow like coals of fire; and above them a permanent contraction of the superciliary muscle, an invariable sign of extreme energy. Short hair, slightly woolly, with metallic reflections; large chest rising and falling like a smith's bellows; arms, hands, legs, feet, all worthy of the trunk. No mustaches, no whiskers, but a large American goatee, revealing the attachments of the jaw whose masseter muscles were evidently of formidable strength. It has been calculated—what has not been calculated?—that the pressure of the jaw of an ordinary crocodile can reach four hundred atmospheres, while that of a hound can only amount to one hundred. From this the following curious formula has been deduced:—If a kilogram of dog produces eight kilograms of masseteric force, a kilogram of crocodile could produce twelve. Now, a kilogram of the aforesaid Robur would not produce less than ten, so that he came between the dog and the crocodile.

From what country did this remarkable specimen come? It was difficult to say. One thing was noticeable, and that was that he expressed himself fluently in English without

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a trace of the drawling twang that distinguishes the Yankees of New England.

He continued: "And now, honorable citizens, for my mental faculties. You see before you an engineer whose nerves are in no way inferior to his muscles. I have no fear of anything or anybody. I have a strength of will that has never had to yield. When I have decided on a thing, all America, all the world, may strive in vain to keep me from it. When I have an idea I allow no one to share it, and I do not permit any contradiction. I insist on these details, honorable citizens, because it is necessary you should quite understand me. Perhaps you think I am talking too much about myself? It does not matter if you do! And now consider a little before you interrupt me, as I have come to tell you something that you may not be particularly pleased to hear."

A sound as of the surf on the beach began to rise along the first row of seats—a sign that the sea would not be long in getting stormy again.

"Speak, stranger!" said Uncle Prudent, who had some difficulty in restraining himself.

And Robur spoke as follows, without troubling himself any more about his audience.

"Yes! I know it well! After a century of experiments that have led to nothing, and trials giving no result, there still exist ill-balanced minds who believe in guiding balloons. They imagine that a motor of some sort, electric or otherwise, might be applied to their pretentious skin bags which are at the mercy of every current in the atmosphere. They persuade themselves that they can be masters of an aerostat as they can be masters of a ship on the surface of the sea. Because a few inventors in calm or nearly calm weather have succeeded in working on an angle with the wind, or even beating to windward in a gentle breeze, they think that the steering of aerial apparatus lighter than the air is a practicable matter. Well, now, look here; You hundred, who believe in the realization of your dreams, are throwing your thousands of dollars not into water but into space! You are fighting the impossible!"

Strange it was that at this affirmation the members of the Weldon Institute did not move. Had they become as deaf as they were patient? Or were they reserving them-

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selves to see how far this audacious contradictor would dare to go?

Robur continued: "What? A balloon! When to obtain the raising of a couple of pounds you require a cubic yard of gas. A balloon pretending to resist the wind by aid of its mechanism, when the pressure of a light breeze on a vessel's sails is not less than that of four hundred horsepower; when in the accident at the Tay Bridge you saw the storm produce a pressure of eight and a half hundredweight on a square yard. A balloon, when on such a system nature has never constructed anything flying, whether furnished with wings like birds, or membranes like certain fish, or certain mammalia——"

"Mammalia?" exclaimed one of the members.

"Yes! Mammalia! The bat, which flies, if I am not mistaken! Is the gentleman unaware that this flyer is a mammal? Did he ever see an omelette made of bat's eggs?"

The interrupter reserved himself for future interruption, and Robur resumed: "But does that mean that man is to give up the conquest of the air, and the transformation of the domestic and political manners of the old world, by the use of this admirable means of locomotion? By no means. As he has become master of the seas with the ship, by the oar, the sail, the wheel, and the screw, so shall he become master of atmospherical space by apparatus heavier than the air—for it must be heavier to be stronger than the air!"

And then the assembly exploded. What a broadside of yells escaped from all these mouths, aimed at Robur like the muzzles of so many guns! Was not this hurling a declaration of war into the very camp of the balloonists? Was not this a stirring up of strife between "the lighter" and "the heavier" than air?

Robur did not even frown. With folded arms he waited bravely till silence was obtained.

By a gesture Uncle Prudent ordered the firing to cease.

"Yes," continued Robur, "the future is for the flying machine. The air affords a solid fulcrum. If you will give a column of air an ascensional movement of forty-five meters a second, a man can support himself on the top of it if the soles of his boots have a superficies of only the

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eighth of a square meter. And if the speed be increased to ninety meters, he can walk on it with naked feet. Or if, by means of a screw, you drive a mass of air at this speed, you get the same result."

What Robur said had been said before by all the partisans of aviation, whose work slowly but surely is leading on to the solution of the problem. To Ponton d'Amécourt, La Landelle, Nadar, De Luzy, De Louvrié, Liais, Beleguir, Moreau, the brothers Richard, Babinet, Jobert, Du Temple, Salives, Penaud, De Villeneuve, Gauchot and Tatin, Michel Loup, Edison, Planavergne, and so many others, belongs the honor of having brought forward ideas of such simplicity. Abandoned and resumed times without number, they are sure some day to triumph. To the enemies of aviation, who urge that the bird only sustains himself by warming the air he strikes, their answer is ready. Have they not proved that an eagle weighing five kilograms would have to fill fifty cubic meters with his warm fluid merely to sustain himself in space?

This is what Robur demonstrated with undeniable logic amid the uproar that arose on all sides. And in conclusion these are the words he hurled in the faces of the balloonists: "With your aerostats you can do nothing—you will arrive at nothing—you dare do nothing! The boldest of your aeronauts, John Wise, although he has made an aerial voyage of twelve hundred miles above the American continent, has had to give up his project of crossing the Atlantic! And you have not advanced a step—not one step —towards your end."

"Sir," said the president, who in vain endeavored to keep himself cool, "you forget what was said by our immortal Franklin at the first appearance of the fire balloon, 'It is but a child, but it will grow!' It was but a child, and it has grown."

"No, Mr. President, it has not grown! It has got fatter —and that is not the same thing!"

This was a direct attack on the Weldon Institute, which had decreed, helped, and paid for the making of a monster balloon. And so propositions of the following kind began to fly about the room: "Turn him out!" "Throw him off the platform!" "Prove that he is heavier than the air!"

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But these were only words, not means to an end.

Robur remained impassible, and continued: "There is no progress for your aerostats, my citizen balloonists; progress is for flying machines. The bird flies, and he is not a balloon, he is a piece of mechanism!"

"Yes, he flies!" exclaimed the fiery Bat. T. Fynn; "but he flies against all the laws of mechanics."

"Indeed!" said Robur, shrugging his shoulders, and resuming, "Since we have begun the study of the flight of large and small birds one simple idea has prevailed—to imitate nature, which never makes mistakes. Between the albatross, which gives hardly ten beats of the wing per minute, between the pelican, which gives seventy——"

"Seventy-one," said the voice of a scoffer.

"And the bee, which gives one hundred and ninety-two per second——"

"One hundred and ninety-three!" said the facetious individual.

"And the common house fly, which gives three hundred and thirty——"

"And a half!"

"And the mosquito, which gives millions——"

"No, milliards!"

But Robur, the interrupted, interrupted not his demonstration. "Between these different rates——" he continued.

"There is a difference," said a voice.

"There is a possibility of finding a practical solution. When De Lucy showed that the stag beetle, an insect weighing only two grammes, could lift a weight of four hundred grammes, or two hundred times its own weight, the problem of aviation was solved. Besides, it has been shown that the wing surface decreases in proportion to the increase of the size and weight of the animal. Hence we can look forward to such contrivances——"

"Which would never fly!" said secretary Phil Evans.

"Which have flown, and which will fly," said Robur, without being in the least disconcerted, "and which we can call streophores, helicopters, orthopters—or, in imitation of the word 'nef,' which comes from 'navis,' call them from 'avis,' 'efs,'—by means of which man will become the master of space. The helix——"

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"Ah, the helix!" replied Phil Evans. "But the bird has no helix; that we know!"

"So," said Robur; "but Penaud has shown that in reality the bird makes a helix, and its flight is helicopteral. And the motor of the future is the screw——"

"From such a maladee
Saint Helix keep us free!"

sung out one of the members, who had accidentally hit upon the air from Herold's *Zampa*.

And they all took up the chorus:

"From such a maladee
Saint Helix keep us free!"

with such intonations and variations as would have made the French composer groan in his grave.

As the last notes died away in a frightful discord Uncle Prudent took advantage of the momentary calm to say, "Stranger, up to now, we let you speak without interruption."

It seemed that for the president of the Weldon Institute shouts, yells, and catcalls were not interruptions, but only an exchange of arguments.

"But I may remind you, all the same, that the theory of aviation is condemned beforehand, and rejected by the majority of American and foreign engineers. It is a system which was the cause of the death of the Flying Saracen at Constantinople, of the monk Volador at Lisbon, of De Leturn in 1852, of De Groof in 1864, besides the victims I forget since the mythological Icarus——"

"A system," replied Robur, "no more to be condemned than that whose martyrology contains the names of Pilâtre de Rozier at Calais, of Blanchard at Paris, of Donaldson and Grimwood in Lake Michigan, of Sivel and of Crocé-Spinelli, and others whom it takes good care to forget."

This was a counter-thrust with a vengeance.

"Besides," continued Robur, "with your balloons as good as you can make them you will never obtain any speed worth mentioning. It would take you ten years to go round the world—and a flying machine could do it in a week!"

Here arose a new tempest of protests and denials, which lasted for three long minutes. And then Phil Evans took up the word.

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"Mr. Aviator," he said, "you who talk so much of the benefits of aviation, have you ever aviated?"

"I have."

"And made the conquest of the air?"

"Not unlikely."

"Hooray for Robur the Conqueror!" shouted an ironical voice.

"Well, yes! Robur the Conqueror! I accept the name and I will bear it, for I have a right to it."

"We beg to doubt it!" said Jem Chip.

"Gentlemen," said Robur, and his brows knit, "when I have just seriously stated a serious thing I do not permit anyone to reply to me by a flat denial, and I shall be glad to know the name of the interrupter."

"My name is Chip, and I am a vegetarian."

"Citizen Chip," said Robur, "I knew that vegetarians had longer alimentary canals than other men—a good foot longer at the least. That is quite long enough; and so do not compel me to make yours any longer by beginning at your ears and——"

"Throw him out."

"Into the street with him!"

"Lynch him!"

"Helix him!"

The rage of the balloonists burst forth at last.

They rushed at the platform. Robur disappeared amid a sheaf of hands that were thrown about as if caught in a storm. In vain the steam whistle screamed its fanfares on to the assembly. Philadelphia might well think that a fire was devouring one of its quarters and that all the waters of the Schuylkill could not put it out.

Suddenly there was a recoil in the tumult. Robur had put his hands into his pockets and now held them out at the front ranks of the infuriated mob.

In each hand was one of those American institutions known as revolvers which the mere pressure of the fingers is enough to fire—pocket mitrailleuses in fact.

And taking advantage not only of the recoil of his assailants but also of the silence which accompanied it,

"Decidedly," said he, "it was not Amerigo that discovered the New World, it was Cabot! You are not Americans, citizen balloonists! You are only Cabo——"

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Four or five pistol shots cracked out, fired into space. They hurt nobody. Amid the smoke the engineer vanished; and when it had thinned away there was no trace of him. Robur the Conqueror had flown, as if some apparatus of aviation had borne him into the air.

CHAPTER V

ANOTHER DISAPPEARANCE

THIS was not the first occasion on which, at the end of their stormy discussions, the members of the Weldon Institute had filled Walnut Street and its neighborhood with their tumult. Several times had the inhabitants complained of the noisy way in which the proceedings ended, and more than once had the policemen had to interfere to clear the thoroughfare for the passersby, who for the most part were supremely indifferent on this question of aerial navigation. But never before had the tumult attained such proportions, never had the complaints been better founded, never had the intervention of the police been more necessary.

But there was some excuse for the members of the Weldon Institute. They had been attacked in their own house. To these enthusiasts for "lighter than air" a no less enthusiast for "heavier than air" had said things absolutely abhorrent. And at the moment they were about to treat him as he deserved, he had disappeared.

So they cried aloud for vengeance. To leave such insults unpunished was impossible to all with American blood in their veins. Had not the sons of Amerigo been called the sons of Cabot? Was not that an insult as unpardonable as it happened to be just—historically?

The members of the club in several groups rushed down Walnut Street, then into the adjoining streets, and then all over the neighborhood. They woke up the householders; they compelled them to search their houses, prepared to indemnify them later on for the outrage on their privacy. Vain were all their trouble and searching. Robur was nowhere to be found; there was no trace of him. He might have gone off in the Go-ahead, the balloon of the Institute, for all they could tell. After an hour's hunt the

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members had to give in and separate, not before they had agreed to extend their search over the whole territory of the twin Americas that form the new continent.

By eleven o'clock quiet had been restored in the neighborhood of Walnut Street. Philadelphia was able to sink again into that sound sleep which is the privilege of non-manufacturing towns. The different members of the club parted to seek their respective houses. To mention the most distinguished amongst them, William T. Forbes sought his large sugar establishment, where Miss Doll and Miss Mat had prepared for him his evening tea, sweetened with his own glucose. Truck Milnor took the road to his factory in the distant suburb, where the engines worked day and night. Treasurer Jim Chip, publicly accused of possessing an alimentary canal twelve inches longer than that of other men, returned to the vegetable soup that was waiting for him.

Two of the most important balloonists—two only—did not seem to think of returning so soon to their domicile. They availed themselves of the opportunity to discuss the question with more than usual acrimony. These were the irreconcilables, Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans, the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute.

At the door of the club the valet Frycollin waited for Uncle Prudent, his master, and at last he went after him, though he cared but little for the subject which had set the two colleagues at loggerheads.

It is only by an euphemism that the verb "discuss" can be used to express the way in which the duet between the president and secretary was being performed. As a matter of fact they were in full wrangle with an energy born of their old rivalry.

"No, sir, no," said Phil Evans. "If I had had the honor of being president of the Weldon Institute, there never, no, never, would have been such a scandal."

"And what would you have done, if you had had the honor?" demanded Uncle Prudent.

"I would have stopped the insulter before he had opened his mouth."

"It seems to me it would have been impossible to stop him until he had opened his mouth," replied Uncle Prudent.

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"Not in America, sir; not in America."

And exchanging such observations, increasing in bitterness as they went, they walked on through the streets farther and farther from their homes, until they reached a part of the city whence they had to go a long way round to get back.

Frycollin followed, by no means at ease to see his master plunging into such deserted spots. He did not like deserted spots, particularly after midnight. In fact the darkness was profound and the moon was only a thin crescent just beginning its monthly life. Frycollin kept a lookout to the left and right of him to see if he was followed. And he fancied he could see five or six hulking fellows dogging his footsteps. Instinctively he drew nearer to his master, but not for the world would he have dared to break in on the conversation of which the fragments reached him.

In short it so chanced that the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute found themselves on the road to Fairmount Park. In the full heat of their dispute they crossed the Schuylkill river by the famous iron bridge. They met only a few belated wayfarers, and pressed on across a wide open tract where the immense prairie was broken every now and then by the patches of thick woodland which make the park different to any other in the world.

There Frycollin's terror became acute, particularly as he saw the five or six shadows gliding after him across the Schuylkill bridge. The pupils of his eyes broadened out to the circumference of his iris, and his limbs seemed to diminish as if endowed with the contractility peculiar to the mollusca and certain of the articulata; for Frycollin, the valet, was an egregious coward.

He was a pure South Carolina negro, with the head of a fool and the carcase of an imbecile. Being only one and twenty, he had never been a slave, not even by birth, but that made no difference to him. Grinning and greedy and idle, and a magnificent poltroon, he had been the servant of Uncle Prudent for about three years. Over and over again had his master threatened to kick him out, but had kept him on for fear of doing worse. With a master ever ready to venture on the most audacious enterprises, Frycollin's cowardice had brought him many arduous trials.

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But he had some compensation. Very little had been said about his gluttony, and still less about his laziness.

Ah, Valet Frycollin, if you could only have read the future! Why, oh why, Frycollin, did you not remain at Boston with the Sneffels, and not have given them up when they talked of going to Switzerland? Was not that a much more suitable place for you than this of Uncle Prudent's, where danger was daily welcomed?

But here he was, and his master had become used to his faults. He had one advantage, and that was a consideration. Although he was a negro by birth he did not speak like a negro, and nothing is so irritating as that hateful jargon in which all the pronouns are possessive and all the verbs infinitive. Let it be understood, then, that Frycollin was a thorough coward.

And now it was midnight, and the pale crescent of the moon began to sink in the west behind the trees in the park. The rays streaming fitfully through the branches made the shadows darker than ever. Frycollin looked around him anxiously. "Brrr!" he said, "there are those fellows there all the time. Positively they are getting nearer! Master Uncle!" he shouted.

It was thus he called the president of the Weldon Institute, and thus did the president desire to be called.

At the moment the dispute of the rivals had reached its maximum, and as they hurled their epithets at each other they walked faster and faster, and drew farther and farther away from the Schuylkill bridge. They had reached the center of a wide clump of trees, whose summits were just tipped by the parting rays of the moon. Beyond the trees was a very large clearing—an oval field, a complete amphitheater. Not a hillock was there to hinder the gallop of the horses, not a bush to stop the view of the spectators.

And if Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans had not been so deep in their dispute, and had used their eyes as they were accustomed to, they would have found the clearing was not in its usual state. Was it a flour mill that had anchored on it during the night? It looked like it, with its wings and sails—motionless and mysterious in the gathering gloom.

But neither the president nor the secretary of the Wel-

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don Institute noticed the strange modification in the landscape of Fairmount Park; and neither did Frycollin. It seemed to him that the thieves were approaching, and preparing for their attack; and he was seized with convulsive fear, paralyzed in his limbs, with every hair he could boast of on the bristle. His terror was extreme. His knees bent under him, but he had just strength enough to exclaim for the last time, "Master Uncle! Master Uncle!"

"What is the matter with you?" asked Uncle Prudent. Perhaps the disputants would not have been sorry to have relieved their fury at the expense of the unfortunate valet. But they had no time; and neither even had he time to answer.

A whistle was heard. A flash of electric light shot across the clearing.

A signal, doubtless? The moment had come for the deed of violence! In less time that it takes to tell, six men came leaping across from under the trees, two onto Uncle Prudent, two onto Phil Evans, two onto Frycollin—there was no need for the two last, for the negro was incapable of defending himself. The president and secretary of the Weldon Institute, although taken by surprise, would have resisted.

They had neither time nor strength to do so. In a second they were rendered speechless by a gag, blind by a bandage, thrown down, pinioned and carried bodily off across the clearing. What could they think except that they had fallen into the hands of people who intended to rob them? The people did nothing of the sort, however. They did not even touch Uncle Prudent's pockets, although, according to his custom, they were full of paper dollars.

Within a minute of the attack, without a word being passed, Uncle Prudent, Phil Evans, and Frycollin felt themselves laid gently down, not on the grass, but on a sort of plank that creaked beneath them. They were laid down side by side.

A door was shut; and the grating of a bolt in a staple told them that they were prisoners.

Then there came a continuous buzzing, a quivering, a frrrr, with the rrr unending.

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And that was the only sound that broke the quiet of the night.

. . . . . .

Great was the excitement next morning in Philadelphia! Very early was it known what had passed at the meeting of the Institute. Everyone knew of the appearance of the mysterious engineer named Robur—Robur the Conqueror—and the tumult among the balloonists, and his inexplicable disappearance.

But it was quite another thing when all the town heard that the president and secretary of the club had also disappeared during the night.

Long and keen was the search in the city and neighborhood! Useless! The newspapers of Philadelphia, the newspapers of Pennsylvania, the newspapers of the United States reported the facts and explained them in a hundred ways, not one of which was the right one. Heavy rewards were offered, and placards were pasted up, but all to no purpose. The earth seemed to have opened and bodily swallowed the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute.

CHAPTER VI

THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY SUSPEND HOSTILITIES

A BANDAGE over the eyes, a gag in the mouth, a cord round the wrists, a cord round the ankles, unable to see, to speak, or to move, Uncle Prudent, Phil Evans, and Frycollin were anything but pleased with their position. Knowing not who had seized them, nor in what they had been thrown like parcels in a goods wagon, nor where they were, nor what was reserved for them—it was enough to exasperate even the most patient of the ovine race, and we know that the members of the Weldon Institute were not precisely sheep as far as patience went. With his violence of character we can easily imagine how Uncle Prudent felt. One thing was evident, that Phil Evans and he would find it difficult to attend the club next evening.

As to Frycollin, with his eyes shut and his mouth closed, it was impossible for him to think of anything. He was more dead than alive.

For an hour the position of the prisoners remained un-

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changed. No one came to visit them, or to give them that liberty of movement and speech of which they lay in such need. They were reduced to stifled sighs, to grunts emitted over and under their gags, to everything that betrayed anger kept dumb and fury imprisoned, or rather bound down. Then after many fruitless efforts they remained for some time as though lifeless. Then as the sense of sight was denied them they tried by their sense of hearing to obtain some indication of the nature of this disquieting state of things. But in vain did they seek for any other sound than an interminable and inexplicable f-r-r-r which seemed to envelop them in a quivering atmosphere.

At last something happened. Phil Evans, regaining his coolness, managed to slacken the cord which bound his wrists. Little by little the knot slipped, his fingers slipped over each other, and his hands regained their usual freedom.

A vigorous rubbing restored the circulation. A moment after he had slipped off the bandage which bound his eyes, taken the gag out of his mouth, and cut the cords round his ankles with his knife. An American who has not a bowie-knife in his pocket is no longer an American.

But if Phil Evans had regained the power of moving and speaking, that was all. His eyes were useless to him —at present at any rate. The prison was quite dark, though about six feet above him a feeble gleam of light came in through a kind of loophole.

As may be imagined, Phil Evans did not hesitate to at once set free his rival. A few cuts with the bowie settled the knots which bound him foot and hand.

Immediately Uncle Prudent rose to his knees and snatched away his bandage and his gag.

"Thanks," said he, in stifled voice.

"No!" said the other, "no thanks."

"Phil Evans?"

"Uncle Prudent?"

"Here we are no longer the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute. We are adversaries no more."

"You are right," answered Evans. "We are now only two men agreed to avenge ourselves on a third whose attempt deserves severe reprisals. And this third is——"

"Robur!"

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"It is Robur!"

On this point both were absolutely in accord. On this subject there was no fear of dispute.

"And your servant?" said Phil Evans, pointing to Frycollin, who was puffing like a grampus. "We must set him free."

"Not yet," said Uncle Prudent. "He would overwhelm us with his jeremiads, and we have something else to do than abuse each other."

"What is that, Uncle Prudent?"

"To save ourselves if possible."

"And even if it is impossible."

"You are right; even if it is impossible."

There could be no doubt that this kidnapping was due to Robur, for an ordinary thief would have relieved them of their watches, jewelry, and purses, and thrown their bodies into the Schuylkill with a good gash in their throats instead of throwing them to the bottom of—— Of what? That was a serious question, which would have to be answered before attempting an escape with any chance of success.

"Phil Evans," began Uncle Prudent, "if, when we came away from our meeting, instead of indulging in amenities to which we need not recur, we had kept our eyes more open, this would not have happened. Had we remained in the streets of Philadelphia there would have been none of this. Evidently Robur foresaw what would happen at the club, and had placed some of his bandits on guard at the door. When we left Walnut Street these fellows must have watched us and followed us, and when we imprudently ventured into Fairmount Park they went in for their little game."

"Agreed," said Evans. "We were wrong not to go straight home."

"It is always wrong not to be right," said Prudent.

Here a long-drawn sigh escaped from the darkest corner of the prison. "What is that?" asked Evans.

"Nothing! Frycollin is dreaming."

"Between the moment we were seized a few steps out into the clearing and the moment we were thrown in here only two minutes elapsed. It is thus evident that these people did not take us out of Fairmount Park."

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"And if they had done so we should have felt we were being moved."

"Undoubtedly; and consequently we must be in some vehicle, perhaps some of those long prairie wagons, or some show-caravan——"

"Evidently! For if we were in a boat moored on the Schuylkill we should have noticed the movement due to the current——"

"That is so; and as we are still in the clearing, I think that now is the time to get away, and we can return later to settle with this Robur——"

"And make him pay for this attempt on the liberty of two citizens of the United States."

"And he shall pay pretty dearly!"

"But who is this man? Where does he come from? Is he English, or German, or French——"

"He is a scoundrel, that is enough!" said Uncle Prudent. "Now to work." And then the two men, with their hands stretched out and their fingers wide apart, began to feel round the walls to find a joint or crack.

Nothing. Nothing; not even at the door. It was closely shut and it was impossible to shoot back the lock. All that could be done was to make a hole, and escape through the hole. It remained to be seen if the knives could cut into the walls.

"But whence comes this never-ending rustling?" asked Evans, who was much impressed at the continuous f-r-r-r.

"The wind, doubtless," said Uncle Prudent.

"The wind! But I thought the night was quite calm."

"So it was. But if it isn't the wind, what can it be?"

Phil Evans got out the best blade of his knife and set to work on the wall near the door. Perhaps he might make a hole which would enable him to open it from the outside should it be only bolted or should the key have been left in the lock.

He worked away for some minutes. The only result was to nip up his knife, to snip off its point, and transform what was left of the blade into a saw.

"Doesn't it cut?" asked Uncle Prudent.

"No."

"Is the wall made of sheet iron?"

"No; it gives no metallic sound when you hit it."

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"Is it of ironwood?"

"No; it isn't iron and it isn't wood."

"What is it then?"

"Impossible to say. But, anyhow, steel doesn't touch it."

Uncle Prudent, in a sudden outburst of fury, began to rave and stamp on the sonorous planks, while his hands sought to strangle an imaginary Robur.

"Be calm, Prudent, be calm! You have a try."

Uncle Prudent had a try, but the bowie-knife could do nothing against a wall which its best blades could not even scratch. The wall seemed to be made of crystal.

So it became evident that all flight was impracticable except through the door, and for a time they must resign themselves to their fate—not a very pleasant thing for the Yankee temperament, and very much to the disgust of these eminently practical men. But this conclusion was not arrived at without many objurgations and loud-sounding phrases hurled at this Robur—who, from what had been seen of him at the Weldon Institute, was not the sort of man to trouble himself much about them.

Suddenly Frycollin began to give unequivocal signs of being unwell. He began to writhe in a most lamentable fashion, either with cramp in his stomach or in his limbs; and Uncle Prudent, thinking it his duty to put an end to these gymnastics, cut the cords that bound him.

He had cause to be sorry for it. Immediately there was poured forth an interminable litany, in which the terrors of fear were mingled with the tortures of hunger. Frycollin was no worse in his brain than in his stomach, and it would have been difficult to decide to which organ the chief cause of the trouble should be assigned.

"Frycollin!" said Uncle Prudent.

"Master Uncle! Master Uncle!" answered the negro between two of his lugubrious howls.

"It is possible that we are doomed to die of hunger in this prison, but we have made up our minds not to succumb until we have availed ourselves of every means of alimentation to prolong our lives."

"To eat me?" exclaimed Frycollin.

"As is always done with a negro under such circumstances! So you had better not make yourself too obvious——"

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"Or you'll have your bones picked!" said Evans.

And as Frycollin saw he might be used to prolong two existences more precious than his own, he contented himself thenceforth with groaning in quiet.

The time went on, and all attempts to force the door or get through the wall proved fruitless. What the wall was made of was impossible to say. It was not metal; it was not wood; it was not stone. And all the cell seemed to be made of the same stuff. When they stamped on the floor it gave a peculiar sound that Uncle Prudent found it difficult to describe; the floor seemed to sound hollow, as if it was not resting directly on the ground of the clearing. And the inexplicable f-r-r-r-r seemed to sweep along below it. All of which was rather alarming.

"Uncle Prudent," said Phil Evans.

"Well?"

"Do you think our prison has been moved at all?"

"Not that I know of."

"Because when we were first caught I distinctly remember the fresh fragrance of the grass and the resinous odor of the park trees. While now, when I take in a good sniff of the air, it seems as though all that had gone."

"So it has."

"Why?"

"We cannot say why unless we admit that the prison has moved; and I say again that if the prison had moved, either as a vehicle on the road or a boat on the stream, we should have felt it."

Here Frycollin gave vent to a long groan, which might have been taken for his last had he not followed it up with several more.

"I expect Robur will soon have us brought before him," said Phil Evans.

"I hope so," said Uncle Prudent. "And I shall tell him——"

"What?"

"That he began by being rude and ended in being unbearable."

Here Phil Evans noticed that day was beginning to break. A gleam, still faint, filtered through the narrow window opposite the door. It ought thus to be about four o'clock in the morning, for it is at that hour in the month of June

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in this latitude that the horizon of Philadelphia is tinged by the first rays of the dawn.

But when Uncle Prudent sounded his repeater—which was a masterpiece from his colleague's factory—the tiny gong only gave a quarter to three, and the watch had not stopped.

"That is strange!" said Phil Evans. "At a quarter to three it ought still to be night."

"Perhaps my watch has got slow," answered Uncle Prudent.

"A watch of the Wheelton Watch Company!" exclaimed Phil Evans.

Whatever might be the reason, there was no doubt that the day was breaking. Gradually the window became white in the deep darkness of the cell. However, if the dawn appeared sooner than the fortieth parallel permitted, it did not advance with the rapidity peculiar to lower latitudes. This was another observation of Uncle Prudent's—a new inexplicable phenomenon.

"Couldn't we get up to the window and see where we are?"

"We might," said Uncle Prudent. "Frycollin, get up!"

The negro arose.

"Put your back against the wall," continued Prudent, "and you, Evans, get on his shoulders while I buttress him up."

"Right!" said Evans.

An instant afterwards his knees were on Frycollin's shoulders, and his eyes were level with the window. The window was not of lenticular glass like those on shipboard, but was a simple flat pane. It was small, and Phil Evans found his range of view was much limited.

"Break the glass," said Prudent, "and perhaps you will be able to see better."

Phil Evans gave it a sharp knock with the handle of his bowie-knife. It gave back a silvery sound, but it did not break.

Another and more violent blow. The same result.

"It is unbreakable glass!" said Evans.

It appeared as though the pane was made of glass toughened on the Siemens system, as after several blows it remained intact.

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The light had now increased, and Phil Evans could see for some distance within the radius allowed by the frame.

"What do you see?" asked Uncle Prudent.

"Nothing."

"What? Not any trees?"

"No."

"Not even the top branches?"

"No."

"Then we are not in the clearing?"

"Neither in the clearing nor in the park."

"Don't you see any roofs of houses or monuments?" said Prudent, whose disappointment and anger were increasing rapidly.

"No."

"What! Not a flagstaff, nor a church tower, nor a chimney?"

"Nothing but space."

As he uttered the words the door opened. A man appeared on the threshold. It was Robur.

"Honorable balloonists!" he said, in a serious voice, "you are now free to go and come as you like."

"Free!" exclaimed Uncle Prudent.

"Yes—within the limits of the Albatross!"

Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans rushed out of their prison. And what did they see?

Four thousand feet below them the face of a country they sought in vain to recognize.

CHAPTER VII

ON BOARD THE ALBATROSS

"WHEN will man cease to crawl in the depths to live in the azure and quiet of the sky?"

To this question of Camille Flammarion's the answer is easy. It will be when the progress of mechanics has enabled us to solve the problem of aviation. And in a few years—as we can foresee—a more practical utilization of electricity will do much towards that solution.

In 1783, before the Montgolfier brothers had built their fire-balloon, and Charles, the physician, had devised his first aerostat, a few adventurous spirits had dreamt of the con-

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quest of space by mechanical means. The first inventors did not think of apparatus lighter than air; for that the science of their time did not allow them to imagine. It was to contrivances heavier than air, to flying machines in imitation of the birds, that they trusted to realize aerial locomotion.

This was exactly what had been done by that madman Icarus, the son of Dædalus, whose wings, fixed together with wax, had melted as they approached the sun.

But without going back to mythological times, without dwelling on Archytas of Tarentum, we find in the works of Dante of Perugia, of Leonardo da Vinci and Guidotti, the idea of machines made to move through the air. Two centuries and a half afterwards inventors began to multiply. In 1742 the Marquis de Bacqueville designed a system of wings, tried it over the Seine, and fell and broke his arm. In 1768 Paucton conceived the idea of an apparatus with two screws, suspensive and propulsive. In 1781 Meerwein, the architect of the Prince of Baden, built an orthopteric machine, and protested against the tendency of the aerostats which had just been invented. In 1784 Launoy and Bienvenu had maneuvered a helicopter worked by springs. In 1808 there were the attempts at flight by the Austrian Jacques Degen. In 1810 came the pamphlet by Deniau of Nantes, in which the principles of "heavier than air" are laid down. From 1811 to 1840 came the inventions and researches of Derblinger, Vigual, Sarti, Dubochet, and Cagniard de Latour. In 1842 we have the Englishman Henson, with his system of inclined planes and screws worked by steam. In 1845 came Cossus and his ascensional screws. In 1847 came Camille Vert and his helicopter made of birds' wings. In 1852 came Letur with his system of guidable parachutes, whose trial cost him his life; and in the same year came Michel Loup with his plan of gliding through the air on four revolving wings. In 1853 came Béléguic and his aeroplane with the traction screws, Vaussin-Chardannes with his guidable kite, and George Cauley with his flying-machines driven by gas. From 1854 to 1863 appeared Joseph Pline with several patents for aerial systems. Bréant, Carlingford, Le Bris, Du Temple, Bright, whose ascensional screws were left-handed; Smythies, Panafieu, Crosnier, &c. At length, in 1863, thanks to the efforts of Nadar, a society of "heavier than air" was founded

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in Paris. There the inventors could experiment with the machines, of which many were patented. Ponton d'Amécourt and his steam helicopter, La Landelle and his system of combining screws with inclined planes and parachutes, Louvrié and his aeroscape, Esterno and his mechanical bird, Groof and his apparatus with wings worked by levers. The impetus was given, inventors invented, calculators calculated all that could render aerial locomotion practicable. Bourcart, Le Bris, Kaufmann, Smyth, Stringfellow, Prigent, Danjard, Pomés and De la Pauze, Moy, Pénaud, Jobert, Haureau de Villeneuve, Achenbach, Garapon, Duchesne, Danduran, Parisel, Dieuaide, Melkiseff, Forlanini, Bearey, Tatin, Dandrieux, Edison, some with wings or screws, others with inclined planes, imagined, created, constructed, perfected, their flying machines, ready to do their work, once there came to be applied to them by some inventor a motor of adequate power and excessive lightness.

This list may be a little long, but that will be forgiven, for it is necessary to give the various steps in the ladder of aerial locomotion, on the top of which appeared Robur the Conqueror. Without these attempts, these experiments of his predecessors, how could the inquirer have conceived so perfect an apparatus? And though he had but contempt for those who obstinately worked away in the direction of balloons, he held in high esteem all those partisans of "heavier than air," English, American, Italian, Austrian, French—and particularly French—whose work had been perfected by him, and led him to design and then to build this flying engine known as the Albatross, which he was guiding through the currents of the atmosphere.

"The pigeon flies!" had exclaimed one of the most persistent adepts at aviation.

"They will crowd the air as they crowd the earth!" said one of his most excited partisans.

"From the locomotive to the aeromotive!" shouted the noisiest of all, who had turned on the trumpet of publicity to awaken the Old and New Worlds.

Nothing, in fact, is better established, by experiment and calculation, than that the air is highly resistant. A circumference of only a yard in diameter in the shape of a parachute can not only impede descent in air, but can render it isochronous. That is a fact.

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It is equally well known that when the speed is great the work of the weight varies in almost inverse ratio to the square of the speed, and therefore becomes almost insignificant.

It is also known that as the weight of a flying animal increases, the less is the proportional increase in the surface beaten by the wings in order to sustain it, although the motion of the wings becomes slower.

A flying machine must therefore be constructed to take advantage of these natural laws, to imitate the bird, "that admirable type of aerial locomotion," according to Dr. Marcy, of the Institute of France.

In short, the contrivances likely to solve the problem are of three kinds:—

1. Helicopters or spiralifers, which are simply screws with vertical axes.

2. Orthopters, machines which endeavour to reproduce the natural flight of birds.

3. Aeroplanes, which are merely inclined planes like kites, but towed or driven by screws.

Each of these systems has had and still has its partisans obstinately resolved to give way in not the slightest particular.

However, Robur, for many reasons, had rejected the two first.

The orthopter, or mechanical bird, offers certain advantages, no doubt. That the work and experiments of M. Renard in 1884 have sufficiently proved. But, as has been said, it is not necessary to copy Nature servilely. Locomotives are not copied from the hare, nor are ships copied from the fish. To the first we have put wheels which are not legs; to the second we have put screws which are not fins. And they do not do so badly. Besides, what is this mechanical movement in the flight of birds, whose action is so complex? Has not Doctor Marcy suspected that the feathers open during the return of the wings so as to let the air through them? And is not that rather a difficult operation for an artificial machine?

On the other hand, aeroplanes have given many good results. Screws opposing a slanting plane to the bed of air will produce an ascensional movement, and the models experimented on have shown that the disposable weight, that

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is to say, the weight it is possible to deal with as distinct from that of the apparatus, increases with the square of the speed. Herein the aeroplane has the advantage over the aerostat even when the aerostat is furnished with the means of locomotion.

Nevertheless Robur had thought that the simpler his contrivance the better. And the screws—the Saint Helices that had been thrown in his teeth at the Weldon Institute—had sufficed for all the needs of his flying machine. One series could hold it suspended in the air, the other could drive it along under conditions that were marvelously adapted for speed and safety.

If the orthopter—striking like the wings of a bird—raised itself by beating the air, the helicopter raised itself by striking the air obliquely with the fins of the screw as it mounted on an inclined plane. These fins, or arms, are in reality wings, but wings disposed as a helix instead of as a paddle wheel. The helix advances in the direction of its axis. Is the axis vertical? Then it moves vertically. Is the axis horizontal? Then it moves horizontally.

The whole of Robur's flying apparatus depended on these two movements, as will be seen from the following detailed description, which can be divided under three heads—the platform, the engines of suspension and propulsion, and the machinery.

Platform.—This was a framework a hundred feet long and twelve wide, a ship's deck in fact, with a projecting prow. Beneath was a hull solidly built, enclosing the engines, stores, and provisions of all sorts, including the water-tanks. Round the deck a few light uprights supported a wire trellis that did duty for bulwarks. On the deck were three houses, whose compartments were used as cabins for the crew, or as machine-rooms. In the center house was the machine which drove the suspensory helices, in that forward was the machine that drove the bow screw, in that aft was the machine that drove the stern screw. In the bow were the cook's galley and the crew's quarters; in the stern were several cabins, including that of the engineer, the saloon, and above them all a glass house in which stood the helmsman, who steered the vessel by means of a powerful rudder. All these cabins were lighted by portholes filled with toughened glass, which has ten times the resistance of

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ordinary glass. Beneath the hull was a system of flexible springs to ease off the concussion when it became advisable to land.

Engines of suspension and propulsion.—Above the deck rose thirty-seven vertical axes, fifteen along each side, and seven, more elevated, in the centre. The Albatross might be called a clipper with thirty-seven masts. But these masts instead of sails bore each two horizontal screws, not very large in spread or diameter, but driven at prodigious speed. Each of these axes had its movement independent of the rest, and each alternate one spun round in a different direction from the others, so as to avoid any tendency to gyration. Hence the screws as they rose on the vertical column of air retained their equilibrium by their horizontal resistance. Consequently the apparatus was furnished with seventy-four suspensory screws, whose three branches were connected by a metallic circle which economized their motive force. In front and behind, mounted on horizontal axes, were two propelling screws, each with four arms. These screws were of much larger diameter than the suspensory ones, but could be worked at quite their speed. In fact, the vessel combined the systems of Cossus, La Landelle, and Ponton d'Amécourt, as perfected by Robur. But it was in the choice and application of his motive force that he could claim to be an inventor.

Machinery.—Robur had not availed himself of the vapor of water or other liquids, nor compressed air and other elastic gases, nor explosive mixtures capable of producing mechanical motion. He employed electricity, that agent which one day will be the soul of the industrial world. But he required no electro-motor to produce it. All he trusted to was piles and accumulators. What were the elements of these piles, and what were the acids he used, Robur only knew. And the construction of the accumulators was kept equally secret. Of what were their positive and negative plates? None can say. The engineer took good care—and not unreasonably—to keep his secret unpatented. One thing was unmistakable, and that was that the piles were of extraordinary strength; and the accumulators left those of Faure-Sellon-Volckmar very far behind in yielding currents whose ampères ran into figures up to then unknown. Thus there was obtained a power to drive the screws and communicate

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a suspending and propelling force in excess of all his requirements under any circumstances.

But—it is as well to repeat it—this belonged entirely to Robur. He kept it a close secret. And, if the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute did not happen to discover it, it would probably be lost to humanity.

It need not be shown that the apparatus possessed sufficient stability. Its center of gravity proved that at once. There was no danger of its making alarming angles with the horizontal, still less of its capsizing.

And now for the metal used by Robur in the construction of his aeronef—a name which can be exactly applied to the Albatross. What was this material, so hard that the bowie-knife of Phil Evans could not scratch it, and Uncle Prudent could not explain its nature? Simply paper!

For some years this fabrication had been making considerable progress. Unsized paper, with the sheets impregnated with dextrin and starch and squeezed in hydraulic presses, will form a material as hard as steel. There are made of it pulleys, rails, and wagon-wheels, much more solid than metal wheels, and far lighter. And it was this lightness and solidity which Robur availed himself of in building his aerial locomotive. Everything—framework, hull, houses, cabins—were made of straw-paper turned hard as metal by compression, and—what was not to be despised in an apparatus flying at great heights—incombustible. The different parts of the engines and the screws were made of gelatinized fiber, which combined in sufficient degree flexibility with resistance. This material could be used in every form. It was insoluble in most gases and liquids, acids or essences, to say nothing of its insulating properties, and it proved most valuable in the electric machinery of the Albatross.

Robur, his mate Tom Turner, an engineer and two assistants, two steersmen and a cook—eight men all told—formed the crew of the aeronef, and proved ample for all the maneuvers required in aerial navigation. There were arms of the chase and of war; fishing appliances; electric lights; instruments of observation, compasses, and sextants for checking the course, thermometers for studying the temperature, different barometers, some for estimating the heights attained, others for indicating the variations of at-

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mospheric pressure; a storm-glass for forecasting tempests; a small library; a portable printing press; a field-piece mounted on a pivot, breech-loading and throwing a three-inch shell; a supply of powder, bullets, dynamite cartridges; a cooking-stove, warmed by currents from the accumulators; a stock of preserves, meats and vegetables sufficient to last for months. Such were the outfit and stores of the aeronef —in addition to the famous trumpet.

There was besides a light india-rubber boat, insubmersible, which could carry eight men on the surface of a river, a lake, or a calm sea.

But were there any parachutes in case of accident? No. Robur did not believe in accidents of that kind. The axes of the screws were independent. The stoppage of a few would not affect the motion of the others; and if only half were working, the Albatross could keep afloat in her natural element.

"And with her," said Robur to his guests—guests in spite of themselves—"I am master of the seventh part of the world, larger than Africa, Oceania, Asia, America, and Europe, this aerial Icarian sea, which millions of Icarians will one day people."

CHAPTER VIII

THE BALLOONISTS REFUSE TO BE CONVINCED

THE president of the Weldon Institute was stupefied; his companion was astonished. But neither of them would allow any of their very natural amazement to be visible.

The valet Frycollin did not conceal his terror at finding himself borne through space on such a machine, and he took no pains whatever to hide it.

The suspensory screws were rapidly spinning overhead. Fast as they were going, they would have to triple their speed if the Albatross was to ascend to higher zones. The two propellers were running very easily and driving the ship at about eleven knots an hour.

As they leaned over the rail the passengers of the Albatross could perceive a long sinuous liquid ribbon which meandered like a mere brook through a varied country amid the gleaming of many lagoons obliquely struck by

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the rays of the sun. The brook was a river, one of the most important in that district. Along its left bank was a chain of mountains extending out of sight.

"And will you tell us where we are?" asked Uncle Prudent, in a voice tremulous with anger.

"I have nothing to teach you," answered Robur.

"And will you tell us where we are going?" asked Phil Evans.

"Through space."

"And how long will that last?"

"Until it ends."

"Are we going round the world?" asked Phil Evans ironically.

"Further than that," said Robur.

"And if this voyage does not suit us?" asked Uncle Prudent.

"It will have to suit you."

That is a foretaste of the nature of the relations that were to obtain between the master of the Albatross and his guests, not to say his prisoners. Manifestly he wished to give them time to cool down, to admire the marvelous apparatus which was bearing them through the air, and doubtless to compliment the inventor. And so he went off to the other end of the deck, leaving them to examine the arrangement of the machinery and the management of the ship or to give their whole attention to the landscape which was unrolling beneath them.

"Uncle Prudent," said Evans, "unless I am mistaken we are flying over Central Canada. That river in the northwest is the St. Lawrence. That town we are leaving behind is Quebec."

It was indeed the old city of Champlain, whose zinc roofs were shining like reflectors in the sun. The Albatross must thus have reached the forty-sixth degree of north latitude, and thus was explained the premature advance of the day with the abnormal prolongation of the dawn.

"Yes," said Phil Evans, "there is the town in its amphitheater, the hill with its citadel, the Gibraltar of North America. There are the cathedrals. There is the Custom House with its dome surmounted by the British flag!"

Phil Evans had not finished before the Canadian city began to slip into the distance.

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The clipper entered a zone of light clouds, which gradually shut off a view of the ground.

Robur, seeing that the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute had directed their attention to the external arrangements of the Albatross, walked up to them and said:

"Well, gentlemen, do you believe in the possibility of aerial locomotion by machines heavier than air?"

It would have been difficult not to succumb to the evidence. But Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans did not reply.

"You are silent," continued the engineer. "Doubtless hunger makes you dumb! But if I undertook to carry you through the air, I did not think of feeding you on such a poorly nutritive fluid. Your first breakfast is waiting for you."

As Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans were feeling the pangs of hunger somewhat keenly they did not care to stand upon ceremony. A meal would commit them to nothing; and when Robur put them back on the ground they could resume full liberty of action.

And so they followed into a small dining-room in the aftermost house. There they found a well-laid table at which they could take their meals during the voyage. There were different preserves; and, among other things, was a sort of bread made of equal parts of flour and meat reduced to powder and worked together with a little lard, which boiled in water made excellent soup; and there were rashers of fried ham; and for drink there was tea.

Neither had Frycollin been forgotten. He was taken forward, and there found some strong soup made of this bread. In truth he had to be very hungry to eat at all, for his jaws shook with fear, and almost refused to work. "If it was to break!—if it was to break!" said the unfortunate negro. Hence continual faintings. Only think! A fall of over four thousand feet, which would smash him to a jelly!

An hour afterwards Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans appeared on the deck. Robur was no longer there. At the stern the man at the wheel in his glass cage, his eyes fixed on the compass, followed imperturbably without hesitation the route given by the engineer.

As for the rest of the crew, breakfast probably kept them

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from their posts. An assistant engineer, examining the machinery, went from one house to the other.

If the speed of the ship was great the two colleagues could only estimate it imperfectly, for the Albatross had passed through the cloud zone which the sun showed some four thousand feet below.

"I can hardly believe it," said Phil Evans.

"Don't believe it!" said Uncle Prudent. And going to the bow they looked out towards the western horizon.

"Another town," said Phil Evans.

"Do you recognize it?"

"Yes! It seems to me to be Montreal."

"Montreal? But we only left Quebec two hours ago!"

"That proves that we must be going at a speed of seventy-five miles an hour."

Such was the speed of the aeronef; and if the passengers were not inconvenienced by it, it was because they were going with the wind. In a calm such speed would have been difficult and the rate would have sunk to that of an express. In a head-wind the speed would have been unbearable.

Phil Evans was not mistaken. Below the Albatross appeared Montreal, easily recognizable by the Victoria Bridge, a tubular bridge thrown over the St. Lawrence like the railway viaduct over the Venice lagoon. Soon they could distinguish the town's wide streets, its huge shops, its palatial banks, its cathedral, recently built on the model of St. Peter's at Rome, and then Mount Royal, which commands the city and forms a magnificent park.

Luckily Phil Evans had visited the chief towns of Canada, and could recognize them without asking Robur. After Montreal they passed Ottawa, whose falls, seen from above, looked like a vast cauldron in ebullition, throwing off masses of steam with grand effect.

"There is the Parliament House."

And he pointed out a sort of Nuremburg toy planted on a hill top. This toy with its polychrome architecture resembled the House of Parliament in London much as the Montreal cathedral resembles St. Peter's at Rome. But that was of no consequence; there could be no doubt it was Ottawa.

Soon the city faded off towards the horizon, and formed but a luminous spot on the ground.

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It was almost two hours before Robur appeared. His mate, Tom Turner, accompanied him. He said only three words. These were transmitted to the two assistant engineers in the fore and aft engine-houses. At a sign the helmsman changed the direction of the Albatross a couple of points to the southwest; at the same time Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans felt that a greater speed had been given to the propellers.

In fact, the speed had been doubled, and now surpassed anything that had ever been attained by terrestrial Engines. Torpedo-boats do their twenty-two knots an hour; railway trains do their sixty miles an hour; the ice boats on the frozen Hudson do their sixty-five miles an hour; a machine built by the Patterson company, with a cogged wheel, has done its eighty miles; and another locomotive between Trenton and Jersey City has done its eighty-four.

But the Albatross, at full speed, could do her hundred and twenty miles an hour, or 176 feet per second. This speed is that of the storm which tears up trees by the roots. It is the mean speed of the carrier pigeon, and is only surpassed by the flight of the swallow (220 feet per second) and that of the swift (274 feet per second).

In a word, as Robur had said, the Albatross, by using the whole force of her screws, could make the tour of the globe in two hundred hours, or less than eight days.

Is it necessary to say so? The phenomenon whose appearance had so much puzzled the people of both worlds was the aeronef of the engineer. The trumpet which blared its startling fanfares through the air was that of the mate, Tom Turner. The flag planted on the chief monuments of Europe, Asia, America, was the flag of Robur the Conqueror and his Albatross.

And if up to then the engineer had taken many precautions against being recognized, if by preference he traveled at night, clearing the way with his electric lights, and during the day vanishing into the zones above the clouds, he seemed now to have no wish to keep his secret hidden. And if he had come to Philadelphia and presented himself at the meeting of the Weldon Institute, was it not that they might share in his prodigious discovery, and convince *ipso facto* the most incredulous? We know how he had been

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received, and we see what reprisals he had taken on the president and secretary of the club.

Again did Robur approach his prisoners, who affected to be in no way surprised at what they saw, of what had succeeded in spite of them. Evidently beneath the cranium of these two Anglo-Saxon heads there was a thick crust of obstinacy, which would not be easy to remove.

On his part, Robur did not seem to notice anything particular, and coolly continued the conversation which he had begun two hours before.

"Gentlemen," said he, "you ask yourselves doubtless if this apparatus, so marvelously adapted for aerial locomotion, is susceptible of receiving greater speed. It is not worth while to conquer space if we cannot devour it. I wanted the air to be a solid support to me, and it is. I saw that to struggle against the wind I must be stronger than the wind, and I am. I had no need of sails to drive me, nor oars nor wheels to push me, nor rails to give me a faster road. Air is what I wanted, that was all. Air surrounds me as it surrounds the submarine boat, and in it my propellers act like the screws of a steamer. That is how I solved the problem of aviation. That is what a balloon will never do, nor will any machine that is lighter than air."

Silence, absolute, on the part of the colleagues, which did not for a moment disconcert the engineer. He contented himself with a half-smile, and continued in his interrogative style, "Perhaps you ask if to this power of the Albatross to move horizontally there is added an equal power of vertical movement—in a word, if, when, we visit the higher zones of the atmosphere, we can compete with an aerostat? Well, I should not advise you to enter the Go-ahead against her!"

The two colleagues shrugged their shoulders. That was probably what the engineer was waiting for.

Robur made a sign. The propelling screws immediately stopped, and after running for a mile the Albatross pulled up motionless.

At a second gesture from Robur the suspensory helices revolved at a speed that can only be compared to that of a siren in acoustical experiments. Their r-r-r-r-r rose nearly an octave in the scale of sound, diminishing gradually in

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intensity as the air became more rarified, and the machine rose vertically, like a lark singing his song in space.

"Master! Master!" shouted Frycollin. "See that it doesn't break!"

A smile of disdain was Robur's only reply. In a few minutes the Albatross had attained the height of 8,700 feet, and extended the range of vision by seventy miles, the barometer having fallen 480 millimeters.

Then the Albatross descended. The diminution of the pressure in high altitudes leads to the diminution of oxygen in the air, and consequently in the blood. This has been the cause of several serious accidents which have happened to aeronauts, and Robur saw no reason to run any risk.

The Albatross thus returned to the height she seemed to prefer, and her propellers beginning again, drove her off to the southwest.

"Now, sirs, if that is what you wanted you can reply."

Then, leaning over the rail, he remained absorbed in contemplation.

When he raised his head the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute stood by his side.

"Engineer Robur," said Uncle Prudent, in vain endeavoring to control himself, "we have nothing to ask about what you seem to believe, but we wish to ask you a question which we think you would do well to answer."

"Speak."

"By what right did you attack us in Philadelphia in Fairmount Park? By what right did you shut us up in that prison? By what right have you brought us against our will on board this flying machine?"

"And by what right, Messieurs Balloonists, did you insult and threaten me in your club in such a way that I am astonished I came out of it alive?"

"To ask is not to answer," said Phil Evans, "and I repeat, by what right?"

"Do you wish to know?"

"If you please."

"Well, by the right of the strongest!"

"That is cynical."

"But it is true."

"And for how long, citizen engineer," asked Uncle Pru-

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dent, who was nearly exploding, " for how long do you intend to exercise that right? "

" How can you? " said Robur, ironically, " how can you ask me such a question when you have only to cast down your eyes to enjoy a spectacle unparalleled in the world? "

The Albatross was then sweeping across the immense expanse of Lake Ontario. She had just crossed the country so poetically described by Cooper. Then she followed the southern shore and headed for the celebrated river which pours into it the waters of Lake Erie, breaking them to powder in its cataracts.

In an instant a majestic sound, a roar as of the tempest, mounted towards them; and, as if a humid fog had been projected into the air, the atmosphere sensibly freshened.

Below were the liquid masses. They seemed like an enormous flowing sheet of crystal amid a thousand rainbows due to refraction as it decomposed the solar rays. The sight was sublime.

Before the falls a foot-bridge, stretching like a thread, united one bank to the other. Three miles below was a suspension-bridge, across which a train was crawling from the Canadian to the American bank.

" The falls of Niagara! " exclaimed Phil Evans. And as the exclamation escaped him, Uncle Prudent was doing all he could to admire nothing of these wonders.

A minute afterwards the Albatross had crossed the river which separates the United States from Canada, and was flying over the vast territories of the West.

CHAPTER IX

ACROSS THE PRAIRIE

In one of the cabins of the after-house Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans had found two excellent berths, with clean linen, change of clothes, and traveling-cloaks and rugs. No Atlantic liner could have offered them more comfort. If they did not sleep soundly it was that they did not wish to do so, or rather that their very real anxiety prevented them. In what adventure had they embarked? To what series of experiments had they been invited? How would the business end? and above all, what was Robur going to do with them?

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Frycollin, the valet, was quartered forward in a cabin adjoining that of the cook. The neighborhood did not displease him; he liked to rub shoulders with the great in this world. But if he finally went to sleep it was to dream of fall after fall, of projections through space, which made his sleep a horrible nightmare.

However, nothing could be quieter than this journey through the atmosphere, whose currents had grown weaker with the evening. Beyond the rustling of the blades of the screws there was not a sound, except now and then the whistle from some terrestrial locomotive, or the calling of some animal. Strange instinct! These terrestrial beings felt the aeronef glide over them, and uttered cries of terror as it passed. On the morrow, the 14th of June, at five o'clock, Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans were walking on the deck of the Albatross. Nothing had changed since the evening; there was a look-out forward, and the helmsman was in his glass cage.

Why was there a look-out? Was there any chance of collision with another such machine? Certainly not. Robur had not yet found imitators. The chance of encountering an aerostat gliding through the air was too remote to be regarded. In any case it would be all the worse for the aerostat—the earthen pot and the iron pot. The Albatross had nothing to fear from the collision.

But what could happen? The aeronef might find herself like a ship on a lee shore if a mountain that could not be outflanked or passed barred the way. These are the reefs of the air, and they have to be avoided as a ship avoids the reefs of the sea. The engineer, it is true, had given the course, and in doing so had taken into account the altitude necessary to clear the summits of the high lands in the district. But as the aeronef was rapidly nearing a mountainous country, it was only prudent to keep a good lookout, in case some slight deviation from the course became necessary.

Looking at the country beneath them, Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans noticed a large lake, whose lower southern end the Albatross had just reached. They concluded, therefore, that during the night the whole length of Erie had been traversed, and that, as they were going due west, they would soon be over Lake Michigan. "There can be

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no doubt of it," said Phil Evans, "and that group of roofs on the horizon is Chicago."

He was right. It was indeed the city from which the seventeen railways diverge, the Queen of the West, the vast reservoir into which flow the products of Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, Missouri, and all the States which form the western half of the Union.

Uncle Prudent, through an excellent telescope he had found in his cabin, easily recognized the principal buildings. His colleague pointed out to him the churches and public edifices, the numerous "elevators" or mechanical granaries, and the huge Sherman Hotel, whose windows seemed like a hundred glittering points on each of its faces.

"If that is Chicago," said Uncle Prudent, "it is obvious that we are going farther west than is convenient for us if we are to return to our starting-place."

And, in fact, the Albatross was traveling in a straight line from the Pennsylvania capital.

But if Uncle Prudent wished to ask Robur to take him eastwards he could not then do so. That morning the engineer did not leave his cabin. Either he was occupied in some work, or else he was asleep, and the two colleagues sat down to breakfast without seeing him.

The speed was the same as that during last evening. The wind being easterly the rate was not interfered with at all, and as the thermometer only falls a degree centigrade for every seventy meters of elevation the temperature was not insupportable. And so, in chatting and thinking and waiting for the engineer, Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans walked about beneath the forest of screws, whose gyratory movement gave their arms the appearance of semi-diaphanous disks.

The State of Illinois was left by its northern frontier in less than two hours and a half; and they crossed the Father of Waters, the Mississippi, whose double-decked steamboats seemed no bigger than canoes. Then the Albatross flew over Iowa after having sighted Iowa city about eleven o'clock in the morning.

A few chains of hills, "bluffs" as they are called, curved across the face of the country trending from the south to the northwest, whose moderate height necessitated no rise in the course of the aeronef. Soon the bluffs gave place

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to the large plains of western Iowa and Nebraska—immense prairies extending all the way to the foot of the Rocky Mountains. Here and there were many rios, affluents or minor affluents of the Missouri. On their banks were towns and villages, growing more scattered as the Albatross sped farther west.

Nothing particular happened during this day. Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans were left entirely to themselves. They hardly noticed Frycollin sprawling at full length in the bow, keeping his eyes shut so that he could see nothing. And they were not attacked by vertigo, as might have been expected. There was no guiding mark, and there was nothing to cause the vertigo, as there would have been on the top of a lofty building. The abyss has no attractive power when it is gazed at from the car of a balloon or deck of an aeronef. It is not an abyss that opens beneath the aeronaut, but an horizon that rises round him on all sides like a cup.

In a couple of hours the Albatross was over Omaha, on the Nebraskan frontier—Omaha city, the real head of the Pacific Railway, that long line of rails, four thousand five hundred miles in length, stretching from New York to San Francisco. For a moment they could see the yellow waters of the Missouri, then the town, with its houses of wood and brick in the center of a rich basin, like a buckle in the iron belt which clasps North America round the waist. Doubtless, also, as the passengers in the aeronef could observe all these details, the inhabitants of Omaha noticed the strange machine. Their astonishment at seeing it gliding overhead could be no greater than that of the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute at finding themselves on board.

Anyhow, the journals of the Union would be certain to notice the fact. It would be the explanation of the astonishing phenomenon which the whole world had been wondering over for some time.

In an hour the Albatross had left Omaha and crossed the Platte River, whose valley is followed by the Pacific Railway in its route across the prairie. Things looked serious for Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans.

"It is serious, then, this absurd project of taking us to the Antipodes."

"And whether we like it or not!" exclaimed the other.

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"Robur had better take care! I am not the man to stand that sort of thing."

"Nor am I!" replied Phil Evans. "But be calm, Uncle Prudent, be calm."

"Be calm!"

"And keep your temper until it is wanted."

By five o'clock they had crossed the Black Mountains covered with pines and cedars, and the Albatross was over the appropriately named Bad Lands of Nebraska—a chaos of ochre-colored hills, of mountainous fragments fallen on the soil and broken in their fall. At a distance these blocks take the most fantastic shapes. Here and there amid this enormous game of knucklebones there could be traced the imaginary ruins of mediæval cities with forts and dungeons, pepper-box turrets, and machicolated towers. And in truth these Bad Lands are an immense ossuary where lie bleaching in the sun myriads of fragments of pachyderms, chelonians, and even, some would have us believe, fossil men, overwhelmed by unknown cataclysms ages and ages ago.

When evening came the whole basin of the Platte River had been crossed, and the plain extended to the extreme limits of the horizon, which rose high owing to the altitude of the Albatross.

During the night there were no more shrill whistles of locomotives or deeper notes of the river steamers to trouble the quiet of the starry firmament. Long bellowings occasionally reached the aeronef from the herds of buffalo that roamed over the prairie in search of water and pasturage. And when they ceased, the trampling of the grass under their feet produced a dull roaring similar to the rushing of a flood, and very different from the continuous f-r-r-r-r of the screws.

Then from time to time came the howl of a wolf, a fox, a wild cat, or a coyote, the *Canis latrans*, whose name is justified by his sonorous bark.

Occasionally came penetrating odors of mint, and sage, and absinthe, mingled with the more powerful fragrance of the conifers which rose floating through the night air.

At last came a menacing yell, which was not due to the coyote. It was the shout of a Redskin, which no Tenderfoot would confound with the cry of a wild beast.

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CHAPTER X

WESTWARD—BUT WHITHER?

THE next day, the 15th of June, about five o'clock in the morning, Phil Evans left his cabin. Perhaps he would to-day have a chance of speaking to Robur? Desirous of knowing why he had not appeared the day before, Evans addressed himself to the mate, Tom Turner.

Tom Turner was an Englishman of about forty-five, broad in the shoulders and short in the legs, a man of iron, with one of those enormous characteristic heads that Hogarth rejoiced in.

"Shall we see Mr. Robur to-day?" asked Phil Evans.

"I don't know," said Turner.

"I need not ask if he has gone out."

"Perhaps he has."

"And when will he come back?"

"When he has finished his cruise."

And Tom went into his cabin.

With this reply they had to be contented. Matters did not look promising, particularly as on reference to the compass it appeared that the Albatross was still steering southwest.

Great was the contrast between the barren tract of the Bad Lands passed over during the night and the landscape then unrolling beneath them.

The aeronef was now more than six hundred miles from Omaha, and over a country which Phil Evans could not recognize because he had never been there before. A few forts to keep the Indians in order crowned the bluffs with their geometric lines, formed oftener of palisades than walls. There were few villages and few inhabitants, the country differing widely from the auriferous lands of Colorado many leagues to the south.

In the distance a long line of mountain crests, in great confusion as yet, began to appear. They were the Rocky Mountains.

For the first time that morning Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans were sensible of a certain lowness of temperature which was not due to a change in the weather, for the sun shone in superb splendor.

"It is because of the Albatross being higher in the air," said Phil Evans.

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In fact the barometer outside the central deck-house had fallen 540 millimeters, thus indicating an elevation of about 10,000 feet above the sea. The aeronef was at this altitude owing to the elevation of the ground. An hour before she had been at a height of 13,000 feet, and behind her were mountains covered with perpetual snow.

There was nothing Uncle Prudent and his companion could remember which would lead them to discover where they were. During the night the Albatross had made several stretches north and south at tremendous speed, and that was what had put them out of their reckoning.

After talking over several hypotheses more or less plausible they came to the conclusion that this country encircled with mountains must be the district declared by an Act of Congress in March, 1872, to be the National Park of the United States. A strange region it was. It well merited the name of a park—a park with mountains for hills, with lakes for ponds, with rivers for streamlets, and with geysers of marvelous power instead of fountains.

In a few minutes the Albatross glided across the Yellowstone River, leaving Mount Stevenson on the right, and coasting the large lake which bears the name of the stream. Great was the variety on the banks of this basin, ribbed as they were with obsidian and tiny crystals, reflecting the sunlight on their myriad facets. Wonderful was the arrangement of the islands on its surface; magnificent were the blue reflections of the gigantic mirror. And around the lake, one of the highest in the globe, were multitudes of pelicans, swans, gulls and geese, bernicles and divers. In places the steep banks were clothed with green trees, pines and larches, and at the foot of the escarpments there shot upwards innumerable white fumaroles, the vapor escaping from the soil as from an enormous reservoir in which the water is kept in permanent ebullition by subterranean fire.

The cook might have seized the opportunity of securing an ample supply of trout, the only fish the Yellowstone Lake contains in myriads. But the Albatross kept on at such a height that there was no chance of indulging in a catch which assuredly would have been miraculous.

In three quarters of an hour the lake was overpassed, and a little farther on the last was seen of the geyser region, which rivals the finest in Iceland. Leaning over the rail, Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans watched the liquid columns

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which leaped up as though to furnish the aeronef with a new element. There were the Fan, with the jets shot forth in rays, the Fortress, which seemed to be defended by waterspouts, the Faithful Friend, with her plume crowned with the rainbows, the Giant, spurting forth a vertical torrent twenty feet round and more than two hundred feet high.

Robur must evidently have been familiar with this incomparable spectacle, unique in the world, for he did not appear on deck. Was it, then, for the sole pleasure of his guests that he had brought the aeronef above the national domain? If so, he came not to receive their thanks. He did not even trouble himself during the daring passage of the Rocky Mountains, which the Albatross approached at about seven o'clock.

By increasing the speed of her wings, as a bird rising in its flight, the Albatross would clear the highest ridges of the chain, and sink again over Oregon or Utah. But the maneuver was unnecessary. The passes allowed the barrier to be crossed without ascending for the higher ridges. There are many of these canyons, or steep valleys, more or less narrow, through which they could glide, such as Bridger Gap, through which runs the Pacific Railway into the Mormon territory, and others to the north and south of it.

It was through one of these that the Albatross headed, after slackening speed so as not to dash against the walls of the canyon. The steersman, with a sureness of hand rendered more effective by the sensitiveness of the rudder, maneuvered his craft as if she were a crack racer in a Royal Victoria match. It was really extraordinary. In spite of all the jealousy of the two enemies of "lighter than air," they could not help being surprised at the perfection of this engine of aerial locomotion.

In less than two hours and a half they were through the Rockies, and the Albatross had resumed her former speed of sixty-two miles an hour. She was steering southwest so as to cut across Utah diagonally as she neared the ground. She had even dropped several hundred yards when the sound of a whistle attracted the attention of Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans.

It was a train on the Pacific Railway on the road to Salt Lake City.

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And then, in obedience to an order secretly given, the Albatross dropped still lower so as to chase the train, which was going at full speed. She was immediately sighted. A few heads showed themselves at the doors of the cars. Then numerous passengers crowded the gangways. Some did not hesitate to climb on the roof to get a better view of the flying machine. Cheers came floating up through the air, but no Robur appeared in answer to them.

The Albatross continued her descent, slowing her suspensory screws and moderating her speed so as not to leave the train behind. She flew about it like an enormous beetle or a gigantic bird of prey. She headed off to the right and left, and swept on in front, and hung behind, and proudly displayed her flag with the golden sun, to which the conductor of the train replied by waving the Stars and Stripes.

In vain the prisoners, in their desire to take advantage of the opportunity, endeavored to make themselves known to those below. In vain the president of the Weldon Institute roared forth at the top of his voice, "I am Uncle Prudent of Philadelphia!" And the secretary followed suit with, "I am Phil Evans, his colleague!" Their shouts were lost in the thousand cheers with which the passengers greeted the aeronef.

Three or four of the crew of the Albatross had appeared on the deck, and one of them, like sailors when passing a ship less speedy than their own, held out a rope, an ironical way of offering to tow them.

And then the Albatross resumed her original speed, and in half an hour the express was out of sight. About one o'clock there appeared a vast disk, which reflected the solar rays as if it were an immense mirror.

"That ought to be the Mormon capital, Salt Lake City," said Uncle Prudent. And so it was, and the disk was the roof of the Tabernacle, where ten thousand saints can worship at their ease. This vast dome, like a convex mirror, threw off the rays of the sun in all directions.

It vanished like a shadow, and the Albatross sped on her way to the southwest with a speed that was not felt, because it surpassed that of the chasing wind. Soon she was in Nevada, over the silver regions, which the Sierra separates from the golden lands of California.

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"We shall certainly reach San Francisco before night," said Phil Evans.

"And then?" asked Uncle Prudent.

It was six o'clock precisely when the Sierra Nevada was crossed by the same pass as that taken by the railway. Only a hundred and eighty miles then separated them from San Francisco, the Californian capital.

At the speed the Albatross was going she would be over the dome by eight o'clock.

At this moment Robur appeared on deck. The colleagues walked up to him.

"Engineer Robur," said Uncle Prudent, "we are now on the confines of America! We think the time has come for this joke to end."

"I never joke," said Robur.

He raised his hand. The Albatross swiftly dropped towards the ground, and at the same time such speed was given her as to drive the prisoners into their cabin.

As soon as the door was shut, Uncle Prudent exclaimed, "I could strangle him!"

"We must try to escape!" said Phil Evans.

"Yes; cost what it may!"

A long murmur greeted their ears. It was the beating of the surf on the seashore. It was the Pacific Ocean!

CHAPTER XI

THE WIDE PACIFIC

UNCLE PRUDENT and Phil Evans had quite made up their minds to escape. If they had not had to deal with the eight particularly vigorous men who composed the crew of the aeronef they might have tried to succeed by main force. But as they were only two—for Frycollin could only be considered as a quantity of no importance—force was not to be thought of. Hence recourse must be had to strategy as soon as the Albatross again took the ground. Such was what Phil Evans endeavored to impress on his irascible colleague, though he was in constant fear of Prudent aggravating matters by some premature outbreak.

In any case the present was not the time to attempt anything of the sort. The aeronef was sweeping along over

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the North Pacific. On the following morning, that of June 16th, the coast was out of sight. And as the coast curves off from Vancouver Island up to the Aleutians— belonging to that portion of America ceded by Russia to the United States in 1867— it was highly probable that the Albatross would cross it at the end of the curve, if her course remained unchanged.

How long the night appeared to be to the two friends! How eager they were to get out of their cabins! When they came on deck in the morning the dawn had for some hours been silvering the eastern horizon. They were nearing the June solstice, the longest day of the year in the northern hemisphere, when there is hardly any night along the sixtieth parallel.

Either from custom or intention Robur was in no hurry to leave his deck-house. When he came out this morning he contented himself with bowing to his two guests as he passed them in the stern of the aeronef.

And now Frycollin ventured out of his cabin. His eyes red with sleeplessness, and dazed in their look, he tottered along like a man whose foot feels it is not on solid ground. His first glance was at the suspensory screws, which were working with gratifying regularity without any signs of haste.

That done, the negro stumbled along to the rail, and grasped it with both hands, so as to make sure of his balance. Evidently he wished to view the country over which the Albatross was flying at the height of seven hundred feet or more.

At first he kept himself well back behind the rail. Then he shook it to make sure it was firm; then he drew himself up; then he bent forward; then he stretched out his head. It need not be said that while he was executing these different maneuvers he kept his eyes shut. At last he opened them.

What a shout! And how quickly he fled! And how deeply his head sank back into his shoulders! At the bottom of the abyss he had seen the immense ocean. His hair would have risen on end—if it had not been wool.

"The sea! the sea!" he cried. And Frycollin would have fallen on the deck had not the cook opened his arms to receive him.

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This cook was a Frenchman, and probably a Gascon, his name being François Tapage. If he was not a Gascon he must in his infancy have inhaled the breezes of the Garonne. How did this François Tapage find himself in the service of the engineer? By what chain of accidents had he become one of the crew of the Albatross? We can hardly say; but in any case he spoke English like a Yankee. "Eh, stand up!" said he, lifting the negro by a vigorous clutch at the waist.

"Master Tapage!" said the poor fellow, giving a despairing look at the screws.

"At your service, Frycollin."

"Did this thing ever smash?"

"No, but it will end by smashing."

"Why? Why?"

"Because everything must end."

"And the sea is beneath us!"

"If we are to fall, it is better to fall in the sea."

"We shall be drowned."

"We shall be drowned, but we shall not be smashed to a jelly."

The next moment Frycollin was on all fours, creeping to the back of his cabin.

During this day the aeronef was only driven at moderate speed. She seemed to skim the placid surface of the sea, which lay glistening in the sunshine about a hundred feet beneath. Uncle Prudent and his companion remained in their cabin, so that they did not meet with Robur, who walked about smoking alone or talking to the mate. Only half the screws were working, yet that was enough to keep the apparatus afloat in the lower zones of the atmosphere.

The crew, as a change from the ordinary routine, would have endeavored to catch a few fish, had there been any sign of them; but all that could be seen on the surface of the sea were a few of those yellow-bellied whales which measure about eighty feet in length. These are the most formidable cetaceans in the northern seas, and whalers are very careful in attacking them, for their strength is prodigious. However, in harpooning one of these whales, either with the ordinary harpoon, the Fletcher fuse, or the javelin-bomb, of which there was an assortment on board,

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there would have been no danger to the men of the Albatross.

But what was the good of such useless massacre? Doubtless to show off the powers of the aeronef to the members of the Weldon Institute. And so Robur gave orders for the capture of one of these monstrous cetaceans.

At the shout of "A whale! a whale!" Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans came out of their cabin. Perhaps there was a whaler in sight! In that case all they had to do to escape from their flying prison was to jump into the sea, and chance being picked up by the vessel.

The crew were all on deck. "Shall we try, sir?" asked Tom Turner.

"Yes," said Robur.

In the engine-room the engineer and his assistant were at their posts ready to obey the orders signaled to them. The Albatross dropped towards the sea, and remained, about fifty feet above it.

There was no ship in sight—of that the two colleagues soon assured themselves—nor was there any land to be seen to which they could swim, providing Robur made no attempt to recapture them.

Several jets of water from the spout holes soon announced the presence of the whales as they came to the surface to breathe. Tom Turner and one of the men were in the bow. Within his reach was one of those javelin-bombs, of Californian make which are shot from an arquebus and which are shaped as a metallic cylinder terminated by a cylindrical shell armed with a shaft having a barbed point. Robur was a little farther aft, and with his right hand signaled to the engineers, while with his left he directed the steersman. He thus controlled the aeronef in every way, horizontally and vertically, and it is almost impossible to conceive with what speed and precision the Albatross answered to his orders. She seemed a living being, of which he was the soul.

"A whale! a whale!" shouted Tom Turner, as the back of a cetacean emerged from the surface about four cable-lengths in front of the Albatross.

The Albatross swept towards it, and when she was within sixty feet of it she stopped dead.

Tom Turner seized the arquebus, which was resting

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against a cleat on the rail. He fired, and the projectile, attached to a long line, entered the whale's body. The shell, filled with an explosive compound, burst, and shot out a small harpoon with two branches, which fastened into the animal's flesh.

"Look out!" shouted Turner.

Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans, much against their will, became greatly interested in the spectacle.

The whale, seriously wounded, gave the sea such a slap with his tail, that the water dashed up over the bow of the aeronef. Then he plunged to a great depth, while the line, which had been previously wetted in a tub of water to prevent its taking fire, ran out like lightning. When the whale rose to the surface he started off at full speed in a northerly direction.

It may be imagined with what speed the Albatross was towed in pursuit. Besides, the propellers had been stopped. The whale was let go as he would, and the ship followed him. Turner stood ready to cut the line in case a fresh plunge should render this towing dangerous.

For half an hour, and perhaps for a distance of six miles, the Albatross was thus dragged along, but it was obvious that the whale was tiring. Then, at a gesture from Robur, the assistant engineers started the propellers astern, so as to oppose a certain resistance to the whale, who was gradually getting closer.

Soon the aeronef was gliding about twenty-five feet above him. His tail was beating the waters with incredible violence, and as he turned over on his back an enormous wave was produced.

Suddenly the whale turned up again, so as to take a header, as it were, and then dived with such rapidity that Turner had barely time to cut the line.

The aeronef was dragged to the very surface of the water. A whirlpool was formed where the animal had disappeared. A wave dashed up on to the deck as if the aeronef were a ship driving against wind and tide.

Luckily, with a blow of the hatchet the mate severed the line, and the Albatross, freed from her tug, sprang aloft six hundred feet under the impulse of her ascensional screws. Robur had maneuvered his ship without losing his coolness for a moment.

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A few minutes afterwards the whale returned to the surface—dead. From every side the birds flew down on to the carcass, and their cries were enough to deafen a congress. The Albatross, without stopping to share in the spoil, resumed her course to the west.

In the morning of the 17th of June, at about six o'clock, land was sighted on the horizon. This was the peninsula of Alaska, and the long range of breakers of the Aleutian Islands.

The Albatross glided over the barrier where the fur seals swarm for the benefit of the Russo-American Company. An excellent business is the capture of these amphibians, which are from six to seven feet long, russet in color, and weigh from three hundred to four hundred pounds. There they were in interminable files, ranged in line of battle, and countable by thousands.

Although they did not move at the passage of the Albatross, it was otherwise with the ducks, divers, and loons, whose husky cries filled the air as they disappeared beneath the waves and fled terrified from the aerial monster.

The twelve hundred miles of the Behring Sea between the first of the Aleutians and the extreme end of Kamtschatka were traversed during the twenty-four hours of this day and the following night. Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans found that there was no present chance of putting their project of escape into execution. Flight was not to be thought of among the deserts of Eastern Asia, nor on the coast of the sea of Okhotsk. Evidently the Albatross was bound for Japan or China, and there, although it was not perhaps quite safe to trust themselves to the mercies of the Chinese or Japanese, the two friends had made up their minds to run if the aeronef stopped.

But would she stop? She was not like a bird which grows fatigued by too long a flight, or like a balloon which has to descend for want of gas. She still had food for many weeks, and her organs were of marvelous strength, defying all weakness and weariness.

During the 18th of June she swept over the peninsula of Kamtschatka, and during the day there was a glimpse of Petropaulovski and the volcano of Kloutschew. Then she rose again to cross the Sea of Okhotsk, running down by the Kurile Isles, which seemed to be a breakwater pierced

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by hundreds of channels. On the 19th, in the morning, the Albatross was over the strait of La Perouse between Saghalien and Northern Japan, and had reached the mouth of the great Siberian river, the Amoor.

Then there came on a fog so dense that the aeronef had to rise above it. At the altitude she was there was no obstacle to be feared, no elevated monuments to hinder her passage, no mountains against which there was risk of being shattered in her flight. The country was only slightly varied. But the fog was very disagreeable, and made everything on board very damp.

All that was necessary was to get above this bed of mist, which was nearly thirteen hundred feet thick, and the ascensional screws being increased in speed, the Albatross was soon clear of the fog and in the sunny regions of the sky. Under these circumstances, Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans would have found some difficulty in carrying out their plan of escape, even admitting that they could leave the aeronef.

During the day, as Robur passed them, he stopped for a moment, and without seeming to attach any importance to what he said, addressed them carelessly as follows: "Gentlemen, a sailing-ship or a steamship caught in a fog from which it cannot escape is always much delaysd. It must not move unless it keeps its whistle or its horn going. It must reduce its speed, and any instant a collision may be expected. The Albatross has none of these things to fear. What does fog matter to her? She can leave it when she chooses. The whole of space is hers." And Robur continued his stroll without waiting for an answer, and the puffs of his pipe were lost in the sky.

"Uncle Prudent," said Phil Evans, "it seems that this astonishing Albatross never has anything to fear."

"That we shall see!" answered the president of the Weldon Institute.

The fog lasted three days, the 19th, 20th, and 21st of June, with regrettable persistence. An ascent had to be made to clear the Japanese mountain of Fusiyama. When the curtain of mist was drawn aside there lay below them an immense city, with palaces, villas, gardens, and parks. Even without seeing it Robur had recognized it by the barking of the innumerable dogs, the cries of the birds of

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prey, and above all, by the cadaverous odor which the bodies of its executed criminals gave off into space.

The two colleagues were out on the deck while the engineer was taking his observations in case he thought it best to continue his course through the fog.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I have no reason for concealing from you that this town is Tokio, the capital of Japan."

Uncle Prudent did not reply. In the presence of the engineer he was almost choked, as if his lungs were short of air.

"This view of Tokio," continued Robur, "is very curious."

"Curious as it may be——" replied Phil Evans.

"It is not as good as Pekin?" interrupted the engineer. "That is what I think, and very shortly you shall have an opportunity of judging."

Impossible to be more agreeable!

The Albatross then gliding southeast, had her course changed four points, so as to head to the eastward.

CHAPTER XII

THROUGH THE HIMALAYAS

DURING the night the fog cleared off. There were symptoms of an approaching typhoon—a rapid fall of the barometer, a disappearance of vapor, large clouds of ellipsoid form clinging to a copper sky, and, on the opposite horizon, long streaks of carmine on a slate-colored field, with a large sector quite clear in the north. Then the sea was smooth and calm and at sunset assumed a deep scarlet hue.

Fortunately the typhoon broke more to the south, and had no other result than to sweep away the mist which had been accumulating during the last three days.

In an hour they had traversed the hundred and twenty-five miles of the Corean strait, and while the typhoon was raging on the coast of China, the Albatross was over the Yellow Sea. During the 22nd and 23rd she was over the Gulf of Pechelee, and on the 24th she was ascending the valley of the Peiho on her way to the capital of the Celestial Empire.

Leaning over the rail, the two colleagues, as the engineer

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had told them, could see distinctly the immense city, the wall which divides it into two parts—the Manchoo town and the Chinese town—the twelve suburbs which surround it, the large boulevards which radiate from its center, the temples with their green and yellow roofs bathed in the rising sun, the grounds surrounding the houses of the mandarins; then in the middle of the Manchoo town the eighteen hundred acres of the Yellow town, with its pagodas, its imperial gardens, its artificial lakes, its mountain of coal which towers above the capital; and in the center of the Yellow town, like a square of a Chinese puzzle enclosed in another, the Red town, that is the imperial palace, with all the peaks of its outrageous architecture.

Below the Albatross the air was filled with a singular harmony. It seemed to be a concert of Æolian harps. In the air were a hundred kites of different forms, made of sheets of palm-leaf, and having at their upper end a sort of bow of light wood with a thin slip of bamboo beneath. In the breath of the wind these slips, with all their notes varied like those of a harmonicon, gave forth a most melancholy murmuring. It seemed as though they were breathing musical oxygen.

It suited Robur's whim to run close up to this aerial orchestra, and the Albatross slowed as she glided through the sonorous waves which the kites gave off through the atmosphere.

But immediately an extraordinary effect was produced amongst the innumerable population. Beatings of the tomtoms and sounds of other formidable instruments of the Chinese orchestra, gun reports by the thousand, mortars fired in hundreds, all were brought into play to scare away the aeronef. Although the Chinese astronomers may have recognized the aerial machine as the moving body that had given rise to such disputes, it was to the Celestial million, from the humblest tankader to the best-buttoned mandarin, an apocalyptical monster appearing in the sky of Buddha.

The crew of the Albatross troubled themselves very little about these demonstrations. But the strings which held the kites, and were tied to fixed pegs in the imperial gardens, were cut or quickly hauled in; and the kites were either drawn in rapidly, sounding louder as they sank, or

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else fell like a bird shot through both wings, whose song ends with its last sigh.

'A' noisy fanfare escaped from Tom Turner's trumpet, and drowned the final notes of the aerial concert. It did not interrupt the terrestrial fusillade. At last a shell exploded a few feet below the Albatross, and then she mounted into the inaccessible regions of the sky.

Nothing happened during the few following days of which the prisoners could take advantage. The aeronef kept on her course to the southwest, thereby showing that it was intended to take her to India. Twelve hours after leaving Pekin Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans caught a glimpse of the Great Wall in the neighborhood of Chen-Si. Then, avoiding the Lung Mountains, they passed over the valley of the Hoangho and crossed the Chinese border on the Thibet side.

Thibet consists of high table-lands without vegetation, with here and there snowy peaks and barren ravines, torrents fed by glaciers, depressions with glittering beds of salt, lakes surrounded by luxurious forests, with icy winds sweeping over all.

The barometer indicated an altitude of thirteen thousand feet above the level of the sea. At that height the temperature, although it was in the warmest months of the northern hemisphere, was only a little above freezing. This cold, combined with the speed of the Albatross, made the voyage somewhat trying, and although the friends had warm traveling wraps, they preferred to keep to their cabin.

It need hardly be said that to keep the aeronef in this rarefied atmosphere the suspensory screws had to be driven at extreme speed. But they worked with perfect regularity, and the sound of their wings almost acted as a lullaby.

During this day, appearing from below about the size of a carrier pigeon, she passed over Garlock, a town of western Thibet, the capital of the province of Gari Khorsum.

On the 27th of June, Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans sighted an enormous barrier, broken here and there by several peaks, lost in the snows that bounded the horizon.

Leaning against the fore-cabin, so as to keep their places notwithstanding the speed of the ship, they watched these colossal masses, which seemed to be running away from the aeronef.

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"The Himalayas, evidently," said Phil Evans; "and probably Robur is going round their base, so as to pass into India."

"So much the worse," answered Uncle Prudent. "On that immense territory we shall perhaps be able to——"

"Unless he goes round by Burmah to the east, or Nepaul to the west."

"Anyhow, I defy him to go through them."

"Indeed!" said a voice.

The next day, the 28th of June, the Albatross was in front of the huge mass above the province of Zang. On the other side of the chain was the province of Nepaul. These ranges block the road into India from the north. The two northern ones, between which the aeronef was gliding like a ship between enormous reefs, are the first steps of the Central Asian barrier. The first was the Kuen Lung, the other the Karakorum, bordering the longitudinal valley parallel to the Himalayas, from which the Indus flows to the west and the Brahmapootra to the east.

What a superb orographical system! More than two hundred summits have been measured, seventeen of which exceed twenty-five thousand feet. In front of the Albatross, at a height of twenty-nine thousand feet, towered Mount Everest. To the right was Dhawalagiri, reaching twenty-six thousand eight hundred feet, and relegated to second place since the measurement of Mount Everest.

Evidently Robur did not intend to go over the top of these peaks; but probably he knew the passes of the Himalayas, among others that of Ibi Ganim, which the brothers Schlagintweit traversed in 1856 at a height of twenty-two thousand feet. And towards it he went.

Several hours of palpitation, becoming quite painful followed; and although the rarefaction of the air was not such as to necessitate recourse being had to the special apparatus for renewing the oxygen in the cabins, the cold was excessive.

Robur stood in the bow, his sturdy figure wrapped in a great-coat. He gave the orders, while Tom Turner was at the helm. The engineer kept an attentive watch on his batteries, the acid in which fortunately ran no risk of congelation. The screws, running at the full strength of the current, gave forth a note of intense shrillness in spite of

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the trifling density of the air. The barometer showed twenty-three thousand feet in altitude.

Magnificent was the grouping of the chaos of mountains! Everywhere were brilliant white summits. There were no lakes, but glaciers descending ten thousand feet towards the base. There was no herbage, only a few phanerogams on the limit of vegetable life. Down on the lower flanks of the range were splendid forests of pines and cedars. Here were none of the gigantic ferns and interminable parasites stretching from tree to tree as in the thickets of the jungle. There were no animals—no wild horses, or yaks, or Thibetan bulls. Occasionally a scared gazelle showed itself far down the slopes. There were no birds, save a couple of those crows which can rise to the utmost limits of the respirable air.

The pass at last was traversed. The Albatross began to descend. Coming from the hills out of the forest region there was now beneath them an immense plain stretching far and wide.

Then Robur stepped up to his guests, and in a pleasant voice remarked, "India, gentlemen!"

CHAPTER XIII
OVER THE CASPIAN

THE engineer had no intention of taking his ship over the wondrous lands of Hindostan. To cross the Himalayas was to show how admirable was the machine he commanded; to convince those who would not be convinced was all he wished to do.

But if in their hearts Uncle Prudent and his colleague could not help admiring so perfect an engine of aerial locomotion, they allowed none of their admiration to be visible. All they thought of was how to escape. They did not even admire the superb spectacle that lay beneath them as the Albatross flew along the river banks of the Punjab.

At the base of the Himalayas there runs a marshy belt of country, the home of malarious vapors, the Terai, in which fever is endemic. But this offered no obstacle to the Albatross, or, in any way affected the health of her crew.

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She kept on without undue haste towards the angle where India joins on to China and Turkestan, and on the 29th of June, in the early hours of the morning, there opened to view the incomparable valley of Cashmere.

Yes! incomparable is this gorge between the major and the minor Himalayas—furrowed by the buttresses in which the mighty range dies out in the basin of the Hydaspes, and watered by the capricious windings of the river which saw the struggle between the armies of Porus and Alexander, when India and Greece contended for Central Asia. The Hydaspes is still there, although the two towns founded by the Macedonian in remembrance of his victory have long since disappeared.

During the morning the aeronef was over Serinuggur, which is better known under the name of Cashmere. Uncle Prudent and his companion beheld the superb city clustered along both banks of the river; its wooden bridges stretching across like threads, its villas and their balconies standing out in bold outline, its hills shaded by tall poplars, its roofs grassed over and looking like molehills; its numerous canals, with boats like nut-shells, and boatmen like ants; its palaces, temples, kiosks, mosques, and bungalows on the outskirts; and its old citadel of Hari-Pawata on the slope of the hill like the most important of the forts of Paris on the slope of Mont Valerien.

"That would be Venice," said Phil Evans, "if we were in Europe."

"And if we were in Europe," answered Uncle Prudent, "we should know how to find the way to America."

The Albatross did not linger over the lake through which the river flows, but continued her flight down the valley of the Hydaspes.

For half an hour only did she descend to within thirty feet of the river and remained stationary. Then, by means of an india-rubber pipe, Tom Turner and his men replenished their water-supply, which was drawn up by a pump worked by the accumulators. Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans stood watching the operation. The same idea occurred to each of them. They were only a few feet from the surface of the stream. They were both good swimmers. A plunge would give them their liberty; and once they had reached the river, how could Robur get

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them back again? For his propellers to work, he must keep at least six feet above the ground.

In a moment all the chances pro and con were run over in their minds. In a moment they were considered, and the prisoners rushed to throw themselves overboard, when several pairs of hands seized them by the shoulders.

They had been watched; and flight was utterly impossible.

This time they did not yield without resisting. They tried to throw off those who held them. But these men of the Albatross were no children.

"Gentlemen," said the engineer, "when people have the pleasure of traveling with Robur the Conqueror, as you have so well named him, on board his admirable Albatross, they do not leave him in that way. I may add you never leave him."

Phil Evans drew away his colleague, who was about to commit some act of violence. They retired to their cabin, resolved to escape, even if it cost them their lives.

Immediately the Albatross resumed her course to the west. During the day at moderate speed she passed over the territory of Cabulistan, catching a momentary glimpse of its capital, and crossed the frontier of the kingdom of Herat, nearly seven hundred miles from Cashmere.

In these much-disputed countries, the open road for the Russians to the English possessions in India, there were seen many columns and convoys, and, in a word, everything that constitutes in men and material an army on the march. There were heard also the roar of the cannon and the crackling of musketry. But the engineer never meddled with the affairs of others where his honor or humanity was not concerned. He passed above them. If Herat, as we are told, is the key of Central Asia, it mattered little to him if it was kept in an English or Muscovite pocket. Terrestrial interests were nothing to him who had made the air his domain.

Besides, the country soon disappeared in one of those sandstorms which are so frequent in these regions. The wind called the "tebbad" bears along the seeds of fever in the impalpable dust it raises in its passage. And many are the caravans that perish in its eddies.

To escape this dust, which might have interfered with

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the working of the screws, the Albatross shot up some six thousand feet into a purer atmosphere.

And thus vanished the Persian frontier and the extensive plains. The speed was not excessive, although there were no rocks ahead, for the mountains marked on the map are of very moderate altitude. But as the ship approached the capital, she had to steer clear of Demavend, whose snowy peak rises some twenty-two thousand feet, and the chain of Elbruz, at whose foot is built Teheran.

As soon as the day broke on the 2nd of July the peak of Demavend appeared above the sandstorm, and the Albatross was steered so as to pass over the town, which the wind had wrapped in a mantle of dust.

However, about six o'clock her crew could see the large ditches that surround it, and the Shah's palace, with its walls covered with porcelain tiles, and its ornamental lakes, which seemed like huge turquoises of beautiful blue.

It was but a hasty glimpse. The Albatross now headed for the north, and a few hours afterwards she was over a little hill at the northern angle of the Persian frontier, on the shores of a vast extent of water which stretched away out of sight to the north and east.

The town was Ashurada, the most southerly of the Russian stations. The vast extent of water was a sea. It was the Caspian.

The eddies of sand had been passed. There was a view of a group of European houses rising along a promontory, with a church tower in the midst of them.

The Albatross swooped down towards the surface of the sea. Towards evening she was running along the coast—which formerly belonged to Turkestan, but now belongs to Russia—and in the morning of the 3rd of July she was about three hundred feet above the Caspian.

There was no land in sight, either on the Asiatic or European side. On the surface of the sea a few white sails were bellying in the breeze. These were native vessels recognizable by their peculiar rig—kesebeys, with two masts; kayuks, the old pirate-boats, with one mast; teimils, and smaller craft for trading and fishing. Here and there a few puffs of smoke rose up to the Albatross from the funnels of the Ashurada steamers, which the Russians keep as the police of these Turcoman waters.

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That morning Tom Turner was talking to the cook, Tapage, and to a question of his replied, "Yes; we shall be about forty-eight hours over the Caspian."

"Good!" said the cook; "then we can have some fishing."

"Just so."

They were to remain for forty-eight hours over the Caspian, which is some six hundred and twenty-five miles long and two hundred wide, because the speed of the Albatross had been much reduced, and while the fishing was going on she would be stopped altogether.

The reply was heard by Phil Evans, who was then in the bow, where Frycollin was overwhelming him with piteous pleadings to be put "on the ground."

Without replying to this preposterous request, Evans returned aft to Uncle Prudent; and there, taking care not to be overheard, he reported the conversation that had taken place.

"Phil Evans," said Uncle Prudent, "I think there can be no mistake as to this scoundrel's intention with regard to us."

"None," said Phil Evans. "He will only give us our liberty when it suits him, and perhaps not at all."

"In that case we must do all we can to get away from the Albatross."

"A splendid craft she is, I must admit."

"Perhaps so," said Uncle Prudent; "but she belongs to a scoundrel who detains us on board in defiance of all right. For us and ours she is a constant danger. If we do not destroy her——"

"Let us begin by saving ourselves!" answered Phil Evans; "we can see about the destruction afterwards."

"Just so," said Uncle Prudent. "And we must avail ourselves of every chance that comes along. Evidently the Albatross is going to cross the Caspian into Europe, either by the north into Russia or by the west into the southern countries. Well, no matter where we stop, before we get to the Atlantic we shall be safe. And we ought to be ready at any moment."

"But," asked Evans, "how are we to get out?"

"Listen to me," said Uncle Prudent. "It may happen during the night that the Albatross may drop to within a

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few hundred feet of the ground. Now there are on board several ropes of that length, and, with a little pluck we might slip down them——"

"Yes," said Evans. "If the case is desperate I don't mind——"

"Nor I. During the night there's no one about except the man at the wheel. And if we can drop one of the ropes forward without being seen or heard——"

"Good! I am glad to see you are so cool; that means business. But just now we are over the Caspian. There are several ships in sight. The Albatross is going down to fish. Cannot we do something now?"

"Sh! They are watching us much more than you think," said Uncle Prudent. "You saw that when we tried to jump into the Hydaspes."

"And who knows that they don't watch us at night?" asked Evans.

"Well, we must end this; we must finish with this Albatross and her master."

It will be seen how in the excitement of their anger the colleagues—Uncle Prudent in particular—were prepared to attempt the most hazardous things. The sense of their powerlessness, the ironical disdain with which Robur treated them, the brutal remarks he indulged in—all contributed towards intensifying the aggravation which daily grew more manifest.

This very day something occurred which gave rise to another most regrettable altercation between Robur and his guests. This was provoked by Frycollin, who, finding himself above the boundless sea, was seized with another fit of terror. Like a child, like the negro he was, he gave himself over to groaning and protesting and crying, and writhing in a thousand contortions and grimaces.

"I want to get out! I want to get out! I am not a bird! Boohoo! I don't want to fly, I want to get out!"

Uncle Prudent, as may be imagined, did not attempt to quiet him. In fact, he encouraged him, and particularly as the incessant howling seemed to have a strangely irritating effect on Robur.

When Tom Turner and his companions were getting ready for fishing, the engineer ordered them to shut up Frycollin in his cabin. But the negro never ceased his

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jumping about, and began to kick at the wall and yell with redoubled power.

It was noon. The Albatross was only about fifteen or twenty feet above the water. A few ships, terrified at the apparition, sought safety in flight.

As may be guessed, a sharp look-out was kept on the prisoners, whose temptation to escape could not but be intensified. Even supposing they jumped overboard they would have been picked up by the india-rubber boat. As there was nothing to do during the fishing, in which Phil Evans intended to take part, Uncle Prudent, raging furiously as usual, retired to his cabin.

The Caspian Sea is a volcanic depression. Into it flow the waters of the Volga, the Ural, the Kour, the Kouma, the Jemba, and others. Without the evaporation which relieves it of its overflow, this basin, with an area of 17,000 square miles, and a depth of from sixty to four hundred feet, would flood the low marshy ground to its north and east. Although it is not in communication with the Black Sea or the Sea of Aral, being at a much lower level than they are, it contains an immense number of fish—such fish, be it understood, as can live in its bitter waters, the bitterness being due to the naphtha which pours in from the springs on the south.

The crew of the Albatross made no secret of their delight at the change in their food the fishing would bring them.

"Look out!" shouted Turner, as he harpooned a good-sized fish, not unlike a shark.

It was a splendid sturgeon seven feet long, called by the Russians belouga, the eggs of which mixed up with salt, vinegar, and white wine form caviare. Sturgeons from the river are, it may be, rather better than those from the sea; but these were welcomed warmly enough on board the Albatross.

But the best catches were made with the drag-nets, which brought up at each haul carp, bream, salmon, salt-water pike, and a number of medium-sized sterlets, which wealthy gourmets have sent alive to Astrakhan, Moscow, and Petersburg, and which now passed direct from their natural element into the cook's kettle without any charge for transport.

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An hour's work sufficed to fill up the larders of the aeronef, and she resumed her course to the north.

During the fishing Frycollin had continued shouting and kicking at his cabin wall and making a tremendous noise.

"That wretched nigger will not be quiet, then?" said Robur, almost out of patience.

"It seems to me, sir, he has a right to complain," said Phil Evans.

"Yes, and I have a right to look after my ears," replied Robur.

"Engineer Robur!" said Uncle Prudent, who had just appeared on deck.

"President of the Weldon Institute!"

They had stepped up to one another, and were looking into the whites of each other's eyes. Then Robur shrugged his shoulders. "Put him at the end of a line," he said.

Turner saw his meaning at once. Frycollin was dragged out of his cabin. Loud were his cries when the mate and one of the men seized him and tied him into a tub, which they hitched on to a rope—one of those very ropes, in fact, that Uncle Prudent had intended to use as we know.

The negro at first thought he was going to be hanged. No! he was only going to be towed!

The rope was paid out for a hundred feet and Frycollin found himself hanging in space.

He could then shout at his ease. But fright contracted his larynx, and he was mute.

Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans endeavored to prevent this performance. They were thrust aside.

"It is scandalous! It is cowardly!" said Uncle Prudent, quite beside himself with rage.

"Indeed!" said Robur.

"It is an abuse of power against which I protest."

"Protest away!"

"I will be avenged, Mr. Robur."

"Avenge when you like, Mr. Prudent."

"I will have my revenge on you and yours."

The crew began to close up with anything but peaceful intentions. Robur motioned them away.

"Yes, on you and yours!" said Uncle Prudent, whom his colleague in vain tried to keep quiet.

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"Whenever you please!" said the engineer.

"And in every possible way!"

"That is enough now," said Robur, in a threatening tone. "There are other ropes on board. And if you don't be quiet, I'll treat you as I have done your servant!"

Uncle Prudent was silent, not because he was afraid, but because his wrath had nearly choked him; and Phil Evans led him off to his cabin.

During the last hour the air had been strangely troubled. The symptoms could not be mistaken. A storm was threatening. The electric saturation of the atmosphere had become so great that about half-past two o'clock Robur witnessed a phenomenon that was new to him.

In the north, whence the storm was traveling, were spirals of half-luminous vapor due to the difference in the electric charges of the various beds of cloud. The reflections of these bands came running along the waves in myriads of lights, growing in intensity as the sky darkened.

The Albatross and the storm were sure to meet, for they were exactly in front of each other.

And Frycollin? Well! Frycollin was being towed—and towed is exactly the word, for the rope made such an angle with the aeronef, now going at over sixty knots an hour, that the tub was a long way behind her.

The crew were busy in preparing for the storm, for the Albatross would either have to rise above it or drive through its lowest layers. She was about three thousand feet above the sea when a clap of thunder was heard. Suddenly the squall struck her. In a few seconds the fiery clouds swept on around her.

Phil Evans went to intercede for Frycollin, and asked for him to be taken on board again. But Robur had already given orders to that effect, and the rope was being hauled in, when suddenly there took place an inexplicable slackening in the speed of the screws.

The engineer rushed to the central deck-house. "Power! More power!" he shouted. "We must rise quickly and get over the storm!"

"Impossible, sir!"

"What is the matter?"

"The currents are troubled! They are intermittent!" And, in fact, the Albatross was falling fast.

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As with the telegraph wires on land during a storm, so was it with the accumulators of the aeronef. But what is only an inconvenience in the case of messages was here a terrible danger.

"Let her down, then," said Robur, "and get out of the electric zone! Keep cool, my lads!"

He stepped on to his quarter-deck and his crew went to their stations.

Although the Albatross had sunk several hundred feet she was still in the thick of the cloud, and the flashes played across her as if they were fireworks. It seemed as though she was struck. The screws ran more and more slowly, and what began as a gentle descent threatened to become a collapse.

In less than a minute it was evident they would get down to the surface of the sea. Once they were immersed no power could drag them from the abyss.

Suddenly the electric cloud appeared above them. The Albatross was only sixty feet from the crest of the waves. In two or three seconds the deck would be under water.

But Robur, seizing the propitious moment, rushed to the central house and seized the levers. He turned on the currents from the piles no longer neutralized by the electric tension of the surrounding atmosphere. In a moment the screws had regained their normal speed and checked the descent; and the Albatross remained at her slight elevation while her propellers drove her swiftly out of reach of the storm.

Frycollin, of course, had a bath—though only for a few seconds. When he was dragged on deck he was as wet as if he had been to the bottom of the sea. As may be imagined, he cried no more.

In the morning of the 4th of July the Albatross had passed over the northern shore of the Caspian.

CHAPTER XIV

THE AERONEF AT FULL SPEED

If ever Prudent and Evans despaired on escaping from the Albatross it was during the two days that followed. It may be that Robur considered it more difficult to keep a

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watch on his prisoners while he was crossing Europe, and he knew that they had made up their minds to get away.

But any attempt to have done so would have been simply committing suicide. To jump from an express going sixty miles an hour is to risk your life, but to jump from a machine going one hundred and twenty miles an hour would be to seek your death.

And it was at this speed, the greatest that could be given to her, that the Albatross tore along. Her speed exceeded that of the swallow, which is one hundred and twelve miles an hour.

At first the wind was in the northeast, and the Albatross had it fair, her general course being a westerly one. But the wind began to drop, and it soon became impossible for the colleagues to remain on the deck without having their breath taken away by the rapidity of the flight. And on one occasion they would have been blown overboard if they had not been dashed up against the deck-house by the pressure of the wind.

Luckily the steersman saw them through the windows of his cage, and by the electric bell gave the alarm to the men in the fore-cabin. Four of them came aft, creeping along the deck.

Those who have been at sea, beating to windward in half a gale of wind, will understand what the pressure was like. Only here it was the Albatross that by her incomparable speed made her own wind.

To allow Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans to get back to their cabin the speed had to be reduced. Inside the deck-house the Albatross bore with her a perfectly breathable atmosphere.

To stand such driving the strength of the apparatus must have been prodigious. The propellers spun round so swiftly that they seemed immovable, and it was with irresistible penetrative power that they screwed themselves through the air.

The last town that had been noticed was Astrakhan, situated at the north end of the Caspian Sea. The Star of the Desert—it must have been a poet who so called it—has now sunk from the first rank to the fifth or sixth. A momentary glance was afforded at its old walls, with their useless battlements, the ancient towers in the center

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of the city, the mosques and modern churches, the cathedral with its five domes, gilded and dotted with stars as if it were a piece of the sky, as they rose from the bank of the Volga, which here, as it joins the sea, is over a mile in width.

Thenceforward the flight of the Albatross became quite a race through the heights of the sky, as if she had been harnessed to one of those fabulous hippogriffs which cleared a league at every sweep of the wing.

At ten o'clock in the morning of the 4th of July the aeronef, heading northwest, followed for a little the valley of the Volga. The steppes of the Don and the Ural stretched away on each side of the river. Even if it had been possible to get a glimpse of these vast territories there would have been no time to count the towns and villages. In the evening the aeronef passed over Moscow without saluting the flag on the Kremlin. In ten hours she had covered the twelve hundred miles which separate Astrakhan from the ancient capital of all the Russias.

From Moscow to St. Petersburg the railway line measures about seven hundred and fifty miles. This was but a half-day's journey, and the Albatross, as punctual as the mail, reached St. Petersburg and the banks of the Neva at two o'clock in the morning.

Then came the Gulf of Finland, the Archipelago of Abo, the Baltic, Sweden in the latitude of Stockholm, and Norway in the latitude of Christiania. Ten hours only for these twelve hundred miles! Verily it might be thought that no human power would henceforth be able to check the speed of the Albatross, and as if the resultant of her force of projection and the attraction of the earth would maintain her in an unvarying trajectory round the globe.

But she did stop nevertheless, and that was over the famous fall of the Rjukanfos in Norway. Gousta, whose summit dominates this wonderful region of Tellemarken, stood in the west like a gigantic barrier apparently impassable. And when the Albatross resumed her journey at full speed her head had been turned to the south.

And during this extraordinary flight what was Frycollin doing? He remained silent in a corner of his cabin, sleeping as well as he could, except at meal times.

Tapage then favored him with his company—and amused

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himself at his expense. "Eh! eh! my boy!" said he. "So you are not crying any more? Perhaps it hurt you too much? That two hours' hanging cured you of it? At our present rate, what a splendid air-bath you might have for your rheumatics!"

"It seems to me we shall soon go to pieces!"

"Perhaps so; but we shall go so fast we shan't have time to fall! That is some comfort!"

"Do you think so?"

"I do."

To tell the truth, and not to exaggerate like Tapage, it was only reasonable that owing to the excessive speed the work of the suspensory screws should be somewhat lessened. The Albatross glided on its bed of air like a Congreve rocket.

"And shall we last long like that?" asked Frycollin.

"Long? Oh, no; only as long as we live!"

"Oh!" said the negro, beginning his lamentations.

"Take care, Fry, take care! for, as they say in my country, the master may send you to the seesaw!"

And Frycollin gulped down his sobs as he gulped down the meat which, in double doses, he was hastily swallowing.

Meanwhile Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans, who were not men to waste time in wrangling when nothing could come of it, agreed upon doing something. It was evident that escape was not to be thought of. But if it was impossible for them to again set foot on the terrestrial globe, could they not make known to its inhabitants what had become of them since their disappearance, and tell them by whom they had been carried off, and provoke—how was not very clear—some audacious attempt on the part of their friends to rescue them from Robur?

Communicate? But how? Should they follow the example of sailors in distress and enclose in a bottle a document giving the place of shipwreck and throw it into the sea? But here the sea was the atmosphere. The bottle would not swim. And if it did not fall on somebody and crack his skull it might never be found.

The colleagues were about to sacrifice one of the bottles on board when an idea occurred to Uncle Prudent. He took snuff, as we know, and we may pardon this fault in an American, who might do worse. And as a snuff-taker he

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possessed a snuff-box, which was now empty. This box was made of aluminium. If it was thrown overboard any honest citizen that found it would pick it up, and, being an honest citizen, he would take it to the police-office, and there they would open it and discover from the document what had become of the two victims of Robur the Conqueror!

And this is what was done. The note was short, but it told all, and it gave the address of the Weldon Institute, with a request that it might be forwarded. Then Uncle Prudent folded up the note, shut it in the box, and bound the box round with a piece of worsted so as to keep it from opening as it fell. And then all that had to be done was to wait for a favorable opportunity.

During this marvelous flight over Europe it was not an easy thing to leave the cabin and creep along the deck at the risk of being suddenly and secretly blown away, and it would not do for the snuff-box to fall into the sea or a gulf or a lake or a watercourse, for it would then perhaps be lost. At the same time it was not impossible that the colleagues might in this way get into communication with the habitable globe.

It was then growing daylight, and it seemed as though it would be better to wait for the night and take advantage of a slackening speed or a halt to go out on deck and drop the precious snuff-box into some town.

When all these points had been thought over and settled, the prisoners found they could not put their plan into execution—on that day, at all events—for the Albatross, after leaving Gousta, had kept her southerly course, which took her over the North Sea, much to the consternation of the thousands of coasting craft engaged in the English, Dutch, French, and Belgian trade. Unless the snuff-box fell on the deck of one of these vessels there was every chance of its going to the bottom of the sea, and Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans were obliged to wait for a better opportunity. And, as we shall immediately see, an excellent chance was soon to be offered them.

At ten o'clock that evening the Albatross reached the French coast near Dunkerque. The night was rather dark. For a moment they could see the lighthouse at Grisnez cross its electric beam with the lights from Dover

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on the other side of the strait. Then the Albatross flew over the French territory at a mean height of three thousand feet.

There was no diminution in her speed. She shot like a rocket over the towns and villages so numerous in northern France. She was flying straight on to Paris, and after Dunkerque came Doullens, Amiens, Creil, Saint Denis. She never left the line; and about midnight she was over the "city of light," which merits its name even when its inhabitants are asleep—or ought to be.

By what strange whim was it that she was stopped over the city of Paris? We do not know; but down she came till she was within a few hundred feet of the ground. Robur then came out of his cabin, and the crew came on to the deck to breathe the ambient air.

Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans took care not to miss such an excellent opportunity. They left their deck-house and walked off away from the others so as to be ready at the propitious moment. It was important their action should not be seen.

The Albatross, like a huge coleopter, glided gently over the mighty city. She took the line of the boulevards, then brilliantly lighted by the Edison lamps. Up to her there floated the rumble of the vehicles as they drove along the streets, and the roll of the trains on the numerous railways that converge into Paris. Then she glided over the highest monuments as if she was going to knock the ball off the Pantheon or the cross off the Invalides. She hovered over the two minarets of the Trocadero and the metal tower of the Champ de Mars, where the enormous reflector was inundating the whole capital with its electric rays.

This aerial promenade, this nocturnal loitering, lasted for about an hour. It was a halt for breath before the voyage was resumed.

And probably Robur wished to give the Parisians the sight of a meteor quite unforeseen by their astronomers. The lamps of the Albatross were turned on. Two brilliant sheaves of light shot down and moved along over the squares, the gardens, the palaces, the sixty thousand houses, and swept the space from one horizon to the other.

Assuredly the Albatross was seen this time—and not

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only well seen but heard, for Tom Turner brought out his trumpet and blew a rousing tarantaratara.

At this moment Uncle Prudent leant over the rail, opened his hand, and let his snuff-box fall.

Immediately the Albatross shot upwards, and past her, higher still, there mounted the noisy cheering of the crowd then thick on the boulevards—a hurrah of stupefaction to greet the imaginary meteor.

The lamps of the aeronef were turned off, and the darkness and the silence closed in around as the voyage was resumed at the rate of one hundred and twenty miles an hour.

This was all that was to be seen of the French capital. At four o'clock in the morning the Albatross had crossed the whole country obliquely; and so as to lose no time in traversing the Alps or the Pyrenees, she flew over the face of Provence to the cape of Antibes. At nine o'clock next morning the San Pietrini assembled on the terrace of St. Peter at Rome were astounded to see her pass over the eternal city. Two hours afterwards she crossed the Bay of Naples and hovered for an instant over the fuliginous wreaths of Vesuvius. Then, after cutting obliquely across the Mediterranean, in the early hours of the afternoon she was signaled by the look-outs at La Goulette on the Tunisian coast.

After America, Asia! After Asia, Europe! More than eighteen thousand miles had this wonderful machine accomplished in less than twenty-three days!

And now she was off over the known and unknown regions of Africa!

. . . . .

It may be interesting to know what had happened to the famous snuff-box after its fall?

It had fallen in the Rue de Rivoli, opposite No. 200, when the street was deserted. In the morning it was picked up by an honest sweeper, who took it to the prefecture of police.

There it was at first supposed to be an infernal machine. And it was untied, examined, and opened with care.

Suddenly a sort of explosion took place. It was a terrific sneeze on the part of the inspector.

The document was then extracted from the snuff-box, and, to the general surprise, read as follows:

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"Messrs. Prudent and Evans, president and secretary of the Weldon Institute, Philadelphia, have been carried off in the aeronef Albatross belonging to Robur the engineer.

"Please inform our friends and acquaintances."

"P. and P. E."

Thus was the strange phenomenon at last explained to the people of the two worlds. Thus was peace given to the scientists of the numerous observatories on the surface of the terrestrial globe.

CHAPTER XV

A SKIRMISH IN DAHOMEY

At this point in the circumnavigatory voyage of the Albatross it is only natural that some such questions as the following should be asked. Who was this Robur, of whom up to the present we know nothing but the name? Did he pass his life in the air? Did his aeronef never rest? Had he not some retreat in some inaccessible spot in which, if he had need of repose or revictualing, he could betake himself? It would be very strange if it were not so. The most powerful flyers have always an eyrie or nest somewhere.

And what was the engineer going to do with his prisoners? Was he going to keep them in his power and condemn them to perpetual aviation? Or was he going to take them on a trip over Africa, South America, Australasia, the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic, and the Pacific, to convince them against their will, and then dismiss them with, "And now, gentlemen, I hope you will believe a little more in heavier than air"?

To these questions it is now impossible to reply. They are the secrets of the future. Perhaps the answers will be revealed.

Anyhow the bird-like Robur was not seeking his nest on the northern frontier of Africa. By the end of the day he had traversed Tunis from Cape Bon to Cape Carthage, sometimes hovering, and sometimes darting along at top speed. Soon he reached the interior, and flew down the beautiful valley of Medjeida above its yellow stream hidden under its luxuriant bushes of cactus and oleander; and scared away the hundreds of parrots that

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perch on the telegraph wires and seem to wait for the messages to pass to bear them away beneath their wings.

Two hours after sunset the helm was put up and the Albatross bore off to the southeast; and on the morrow, after clearing the Tell Mountains, she saw the rising of the morning star over the sands of the Sahara.

On the 30th of July there was seen from the aeronef the little village of Geryville, founded like Laghouat on the frontier of the desert to facilitate the future conquest of Kabylia. Next, not without difficulty, the peaks of Stillero were passed against a somewhat boisterous wind. Then the desert was crossed, sometimes leisurely over the Ksars or green oases, sometimes at terrific speed that far outstripped the flight of the vultures. Often the crew had to fire into the flocks of these birds which, a dozen or so at a time, fearlessly hurled themselves on to the aeronef to the extreme terror of Frycollin.

But if the vultures could only reply with cries and blows of beaks and talons, the natives, in no way less savage, were not sparing of their musket-shots, particularly when crossing the Mountain of Sel, whose green and violet slope bore its cape of white. Then the Albatross was at last over the grand Sahara; and at once she rose into the higher zones so as to escape from a simoom which was sweeping a wave of ruddy sand along the surface of the ground like a bore on the surface of the sea.

Then the desolate table-lands of Chetka scattered their ballast in blackish waves up to the fresh and verdant valley of Ain-Massin. It is difficult to conceive the variety of the territories which could be seen at one view. To the green hills covered with trees and shrubs there succeeded long gray undulations draped like the folds of an Arab burnous and broken in picturesque masses. In the distance could be seen the wadys with their torrential waters, their forests of palm-trees, and blocks of small houses grouped on a hill around a mosque, among them Metlili, where there vegetates a religious chief, the grand marabout Sidi Chick.

Before night several hundred miles had been accomplished above a flattish country ridged occasionally with large sand-hills. If the Albatross had halted, she would have come to the earth in the depths of the Wargla oasis hidden beneath an immense forest of palm-trees. The

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town was clearly enough displayed with its three distinct quarters, the ancient palace of the Sultan, a kind of fortified Kasbah, houses of brick which had been left to the sun to bake, and artesian wells dug in the valley where the aeronef could have renewed her water supply. But, thanks to her extraordinary speed, the waters of the Hydaspes taken in the vale of Cashmere still filled her tanks in the center of the African desert.

Was the Albatross seen by the Arabs, the Mozabites, and the negroes who share amongst them the town of Wargla? Certainly, for she was saluted with many hundred gunshots, and the bullets fell back before they reached her.

Then came the night, that silent night in the desert of which Felicien David has so poetically told us the secrets.

During the following hours the course lay southwesterly, cutting across the routes of El Golea, one of which was explored in 1859 by the intrepid Duveyrier.

The darkness was profound. Nothing could be seen of the Trans-Saharan Railway constructing on the plans of Duponchel—a long ribbon of iron destined to bind together Algiers and Timbuctoo by way of Laghouat and Gardaia, and destined eventually to run down into the Gulf of Guinea.

Then the Albatross entered the equatorial region below the tropic of Cancer. Six hundred miles from the northern frontier of the Sahara she crossed the route on which Major Laing met his death in 1846, and crossed the road of the caravans from Morocco to the Soudan, and that part of the desert swept by the Tuaregs, where could be heard what is called "the song of the sand," a soft and plaintive murmur that seems to escape from the ground.

Only one thing happened. A cloud of locusts came flying along, and there fell such a cargo of them on board as to threaten to sink the ship. But all hands set to work to clear the deck, and the locusts were thrown over except a few hundreds kept by Tapage for his larder. And he served them up in so succulent a fashion that Frycollin forgot for the moment his perpetual trances and said, "These are as good as prawns."

The aeronef was then eleven hundred miles from the Wargla oasis and almost on the northern frontier of the

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Soudan. About two o'clock in the afternoon a city appeared in the bend of a large river. The river was the Niger. The city was Timbuctoo.

If, up to then, this African Mecca had only been visited by the travelers of the ancient world, Batouta, Khazan, Imbert, Mungo Park, Adams, Laing, Caillé, Barth, Lenz, on that day by a most singular chance the two Americans could boast of having seen, heard, and smelt it, on their return to America—if they ever got back there.

Of having seen it, because their view included the whole triangle of three or four miles in circumference; of having heard it, because the day was one of some rejoicing and the noise was terrible; of having smelt it, because the olfactory nerve could not but be very disagreeably affected by the odors of the Youbou-Kamo square, where the meat-market stands close to the palace of the ancient Somai kings.

The engineer had no notion of allowing the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute to be ignorant that they had the honor of contemplating the Queen of the Soudan, now in the power of the Tuaregs of Taganet.

"Gentlemen, Timbuctoo!" he said, in the same tone as twelve days before he had said, "Gentlemen, India!"

Then he continued, "Timbuctoo is an important city of from twelve to thirteen thousand inhabitants, formerly illustrious in science and art. Perhaps you would like to stay there for a day or two?"

Such a proposal could only have been made ironically. "But," continued he, "it would be dangerous among the Negroes, Berbers, and Foullanes who occupy it—particularly as our arrival in an aeronef might prejudice them against you."

"Sir," said Phil Evans, in the same tone, "for the pleasure of leaving you we would willingly risk an unpleasant reception from the natives. Prison for prison, we would rather be in Timbuctoo than on the Albatross."

"That is a matter of taste," answered the engineer. "Anyhow, I shall not try the adventure, for I am responsible for the safety of the guests who do me the honor to travel with me."

"And so," said Uncle Prudent, explosively, "you are not content with being our jailer, but you insult us."

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"Oh! a little irony, that is all!"

"Are there any weapons on board?"

"Oh! quite an arsenal."

"Two revolvers will do, if I hold one and you the other."

"A duel!" exclaimed Robur, "a duel, which would perhaps cause the death of one of us."

"Which certainly would cause it."

"Well! No, Mr. President of the Weldon Institute, I very much prefer keeping you alive."

"To be sure of living yourself. That is wise."

"Wise or not, it suits me. You are at liberty to think as you like, and to complain to those who have the power to help you—if you can."

"And that we have done, Mr. Robur."

"Indeed!"

"Was it so difficult when we were crossing the inhabited part of Europe to drop a letter overboard?"

"Did you do that?" said Robur, in a paroxysm of rage.

"And if we have done it?"

"If you have done it—you deserve——"

"What, sir?"

"To follow your letter overboard."

"Throw us over, then. We did do it."

Robur stepped towards them. At a gesture from him Tom Turner and some of the crew ran up. The engineer was seriously tempted to put his threat into execution, and, fearful perhaps of yielding to it, he precipitately rushed into his cabin.

"Good!" exclaimed Phil Evans.

"And what he dare not do," said Uncle Prudent, "I will do! Yes, I will do!"

At the moment the population of Timbuctoo were crowding into the squares and roads and the terraces built like amphitheaters. In the rich quarters of Sankere and Sarahama, as in the miserable huts at Raguidi, the priests from the minarets were thundering their loudest maledictions against the aerial monster. These were more harmless than the rifle-bullets; though assuredly if the aeronef had come to earth she would have certainly been torn to pieces.

For some miles noisy flocks of storks, francolins, and

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ibises escorted the Albatross and tried to race her, but in her rapid flight she soon distanced them.

The evening came. The air was troubled by the roarings of the numerous flocks of elphants and buffaloes which wander over this land, whose fertility is simply marvelous. For forty-eight hours the whole of the region between the prime meridian and the second degree, in the bend of the Niger, was viewed from the Albatross.

If a geographer had only such an apparatus at his command, with what facility could he map the country, note the elevations, fix the courses of the rivers and their affluents, and determine the positions of the towns and villages! There would then be no huge blanks on the map of Africa, no dotted lines, no vague designations which are the despair of cartographers.

In the morning of the 11th the Albatross crossed the mountains of northern Guinea, between the Soudan and the gulf which bears their name. On the horizon was the confused outline of the Kong mountains in the kingdom of Dahomey.

Since the departure from Timbuctoo Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans noticed that the course had been due south. If that direction was persisted in they would cross the equator in six more degrees. The Albatross would then abandon the continents and fly not over the Behring Sea, or the Caspian Sea, or the North Sea, or the Mediterranean, but over the Atlantic Ocean.

This look-out was not particularly pleasing to the two friends, whose chances of escape had sunk to below zero.

But the Albatross had slackened speed as though hesitating to leave Africa behind. Was Robur thinking of going back? No; but his attention had been particularly attracted to the country which he was then crossing.

We know—and he knew—that the kingdom of Dahomey is one of the most powerful on the West Coast of Africa. Strong enough to hold its own with its neighbor Ashantee, its area is somewhat small, being contained within three hundred and sixty leagues from north to south, and one hundred and eighty from east to west. But its population numbers some seven or eight hundred thousand, including

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the neighboring independent territories of Whydah and Ardrah.

If Dahomey is not a large country, it is often talked about. It is celebrated for the frightful cruelties which signalize its annual festivals, and by its human sacrifices—fearful hecatombs intended to honor the sovereign it has lost and the sovereign who has succeeded him. It is even a matter of politeness when the King of Dahomey receives a visit from some high personage or some foreign ambassador to give him a surprise present of a dozen heads, cut off in his honor by the minister of justice, the "minghan," who is wonderfully skillful in that branch of his duties.

When the Albatross came flying over Dahomey the old King Bahadou had just died, and the whole population was proceeding to the enthronization of his successor. Hence there was great agitation all over the country, and it did not escape Robur that everybody was on the move.

Long lines of Dahomians were hurrying along the roads from the country into the capital, Abomey. Well kept roads radiating among vast plains clothed with giant trees, immense fields of manioc, magnificent forests of palms, cocoa-trees, mimosas, orange-trees, mango-trees—such was the country whose perfumes mounted to the Albatross, while many parrots and cardinals swarmed among the trees.

The engineer, leaning over the rail, seemed deep in thought, and exchanged but a few words with Tom Turner. It did not look as though the Albatross had attracted the attention of those moving masses, which were often invisible under the impenetrable roof of trees. This was doubtless due to her keeping at a good altitude amid a bank of light cloud.

About eleven o'clock in the morning the capital was sighted, surrounded by its walls, defended by a fosse measuring twelve miles round, with wide, regular streets on the flat plain, and a large square on the northern side occupied by the king's palace. This huge collection of buildings is commanded by a terrace not far from the place of sacrifice. During the festival days it is from this high terrace that they throw the prisoners tied up in wicker baskets, and it can be imagined with what fury these unhappy wretches are cut in pieces.

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In one of the courtyards which divide the king's palace there were drawn up four thousand warriors, one of the contingents of the royal army—and not the least courageous one.

If it is doubtful if there are any Amazons on the river of that name, there is no doubt of there being Amazons at Dahomey. Some have a blue shirt with a blue or red scarf, with white-and-blue striped trousers and a white cap; others, the elephant-huntresses, have a heavy carbine, a short-bladed dagger, and two antelope horns fixed to their heads by a band of iron. The artillery-women have a blue-and-red tunic, and, as weapons, blunderbusses and old cast cannons; and another brigade, consisting of vestal virgins pure as Diana, have blue tunics and white trousers. If we add to these Amazons five or six thousand men in cotton drawers and shirts, with a knotted tuft to increase their stature, we shall have passed in review the Dahomian army.

Abomey on this day was deserted. The sovereign, the royal family, the masculine and feminine army, and the population had all gone out of the capital to a vast plain a few miles away surrounded by magnificent forests.

On this plain the recognition of the new king was to take place. Here it was that thousands of prisoners taken during recent razzias were to be immolated in his honor.

It was about two o'clock when the Albatross arrived over the plain and began to descend among the clouds which still hid her from the Dahomians.

There were sixteen thousand people at least come from all parts of the kingdom, from Whydah, and Kerapay, and Ardrah, and Tombory, and the most distant villages.

The new king—a sturdy fellow named Bou-Nadi—some five-and-twenty years old, was seated on a hillock shaded by a group of wide-branched trees. Before him stood his male army, his Amazons, and his people.

At the foot of the mound fifty musicians were playing on their barbarous instruments, elephants' tusks giving forth a husky note, deerskin drums, calabashes, guitars, bells struck with an iron clapper, and bamboo flutes, whose shrill whistle was heard over all. Every other second came discharges of guns and blunderbusses, discharges of cannons with the carriages jumping so as to imperil the

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lives of the artillery-women, and a general uproar so intense that even the thunder would be unheard amidst it.

In one corner of the plain, under a guard of soldiers, were grouped the prisoners destined to accompany the defunct king into the other world. At the obsequies of Ghozo, the father of Bahadou, his son had dispatched three thousand, and Bou-Nadi could not do less than his predecessor. For an hour there was a series of discourses, harangues, palavers and dances, executed not only by professionals, but by the Amazons, who displayed much martial grace.

But the time for the hecatomb was approaching. Robur, who knew the customs of Dahomey, did not lose sight of the men, women, and children reserved for butchery.

The minghan was standing at the foot of the hillock. He was brandishing his exeuctioner's sword, with its curved blade surmounted by a metal bird, whose weight rendered the cut more certain.

This time he was not alone. He could not have performed the task. Near him were grouped a hundred executioners, all accustomed to cut off heads at one blow.

The Albatross came slowly down in an oblique direction. Soon she emerged from the bed of clouds which hid her till she was within three hundred feet of the ground, and for the first time she was visible from below.

Contrary to what had hitherto happened, the savages saw in her a celestial being come to render homage to King Bahadou. The enthusiasm was indescribable, the shouts were interminable, the prayers were terrific—prayers addressed to this supernatural hippogriff, which had doubtless come to take the king's body to the higher regions of the Dahomian heaven.

And now the first head fell under the minghan's sword, and the prisoners were led up in hundreds before the horrible executioners.

Suddenly a gun was fired from the Albatross. The minister of justice fell dead on his face.

"Well aimed, Tom!" said Robur.

His comrades, armed as he was, stood ready to fire when the order was given.

But a change came over the crowd below. They had understood. The winged monster was not a friendly spirit,

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it was a hostile spirit. And after the fall of the minghan loud shouts for revenge arose on all sides. Almost immediately a fusillade resounded over the plain.

These menaces did not prevent the Albatross from descending boldly to within a hundred and fifty feet of the ground. Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans, whatever were their feelings towards Robur, could not help joining him in such a work of humanity.

"Let use free the prisoners!" they shouted.

"That is what I am going to do!" said the engineer.

And the magazine rifles of the Albatross in the hands of the colleagues, as in the hands of the crew, began to rain down the bullets, of which not one was lost in the masses below. And the little gun shot forth its shrapnel, which really did marvels.

The prisoners, although they did not understand how the help had come to them, broke their bonds, while the soldiers were firing at the aeronef. The stern screw was shot through by a bullet, and a few holes were made in the hull. Frycollin, crouching in his cabin, received a graze from a bullet that came through the deck-house.

"Ah! They will have them!" said Tom Turner. And, rushing to the magazine, he returned with a dozen dynamite cartridges, which he distributed to the men. At a sign from Robur these cartridges were fired at the hillock, and as they reached the ground exploded like so many small shells.

The king and his court and army and people were stricken with fear at the turn things had taken. They fled under the trees, while the prisoners ran off without anybody thinking of pursuing them.

In this way was the festival interfered with. And in this way did Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans recognize the power of the aeronef and the services it could render to humanity.

Soon the Albatross rose again to a moderate height, and passing over Whydah lost to view this savage coast which the southwest wind hems round with an inaccessible surf. And she flew out over the Atlantic.

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CHAPTER XVI
OVER THE ATLANTIC

YES, the Atlantic! The fears of the two colleagues were realized; but it did not seem as though Robur had the least anxiety about venturing over this vast ocean. Both he and his men seemed quite unconcerned about it, and had gone back to their stations.

Whither was the Albatross bound? Was she going more than round the world as Robur had said? Even if she were, the voyage must end somewhere. That Robur spent his life in the air on board the aeronef and never came to the ground was impossible. How could he make up his stock of provisions and the materials required for working his machines? He must have some retreat, some harbor of refuge in some unknown and inaccessible spot where the Albatross could revictual. That he had broken off all connection with the inhabitants of the land might be true, but with every point on the surface of the earth, certainly not.

That being the case, where was this point? How had the engineer come to choose it? Was he expected by a little colony of which he was the chief? Could he there find a new crew?

What means had he that he should be able to build so costly a vessel as the Albatross and keep her building secret? It is true his living was not expensive. But, finally, who was this Robur? Where did he come from? What had been his history? Here were riddles impossible to solve; and Robur was not the man to assist willingly in their solution.

It is not to be wondered at that these insoluble problems drove the colleagues almost to frenzy. To find themselves whipped off into the unknown without knowing what the end might be, doubting even if the adventure would end, sentenced to perpetual aviation, was this not enough to drive the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute to extremities?

Meanwhile the Albatross drove along above the Atlantic, and in the morning when the sun rose there was nothing to be seen but the circular line where earth met sky. Not a spot of land was in sight in this huge field of vision. Africa had vanished beneath the northern horizon.

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When Frycollin ventured out of his cabin and saw all this water beneath him, fear took possession of him.

Of the hundred and forty-five million square miles of which the area of the world's waters consists, the Atlantic claims about a quarter; and it seemed as though the engineer was in no hurry to cross it. There was now no going at full speed, none of the hundred and twenty miles an hour at which the Albatross had flown over Europe. Here, where the southwest winds prevail, the wind was ahead of them, and though it was not very strong, it would not do to defy it. And the Albatross was sent along at a moderate speed, which, however, easily outstripped that of the fastest mail-boat.

On the 13th of July she crossed the line, and the fact was duly announced to the crew. It was then that Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans ascertained that they were bound for the southern hemisphere. The crossing of the line took place without any of the Neptunian ceremonies that still linger on certain ships. Tapage was the only one to mark the event, and he did so by pouring a pint of water down Frycollin's neck.

On the 18th of July, when beyond the tropic of Capricorn, another phenomenon was noticed, which would have been somewhat alarming to a ship on the sea. A strange succession of luminous waves widened out over the surface of the ocean with a speed estimated at quite sixty miles an hour. The waves ran along at about eighty feet from one another, tracing two furrows of light. As night fell a bright reflection rose even to the Albatross, so that she might have been taken for a flaming aerolite. Never before had Robur sailed on a sea of fire—a fire without heat—which there was no need to flee from as it mounted upwards into the sky.

The cause of this light must have been electricity; it could not be attributed to a bank of fish spawn, nor to a crowd of those animalculæ that give phosphorescence to the sea, and this showed that the electrical tension of the atmosphere was considerable.

In the morning an ordinary ship would probably have been lost. But the Albatross played with the winds and waves like the powerful bird whose name she bore. If she did not walk on their surface like the petrels, she could

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like the eagles find calm and sunshine in the higher zones.

They had now passed the forty-seventh parallel. The day was but little over seven hours long, and would become even less as they approached the Pole.

About one o'clock in the afternoon the Albatross was floating along in a lower current than usual, about a hundred feet from the level of the sea. The air was calm, but in certain parts of the sky were thick black clouds, massed in mountains on their upper surface, and ruled off below by a sharp horizontal line. From these clouds a few lengthy protuberances escaped, and their points as they fell seemed to draw up hills of foaming water to meet them.

Suddenly the water shot up in the form of a gigantic hour-glass, and the Albatross was enveloped in the eddy of an enormous waterspout, while twenty others, black as ink, raged around her. Fortunately the gyratory movement of the water was opposite to that of the suspensory screws, otherwise the aeronef would have been hurled into the sea. But she began to spin round on herself with frightful rapidity.

The danger was immense, and perhaps impossible to escape, for the engineer could not get through the spout which sucked him back in defiance of his propellers. The men, thrown to the ends of the deck by centrifugal force, were grasping the rail to save themselves from being shot off.

"Keep cool!" shouted Robur.

They wanted all their coolness, and their patience, too.

Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans, who had just come out of their cabin, were hurled back at the risk of flying overboard.

As she spun the Albatross was carried along by the spout, which pirouetted along the waves with a speed enough to make the helices jealous. And if she escaped from the spout she might be caught by another, and jerked to pieces with the shock.

"Get the gun ready!" said Robur.

The order was given to Tom Turner, who was crouching behind the swivel amidships where the effect of the centrifugal force was least felt. He understood. In a moment he had opened the breech and slipped in a cartridge from the ammunition-box at hand. The gun went off, and

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the waterspouts collapsed, and with them vanished the platform of cloud they seemed to bear above them.

"Nothing broken on board?" asked Robur.

"No," answered Tom Turner. "But we don't want to have another game of humming-top like that!"

For ten minutes or so the Albatross had been in extreme peril. Had it not been for her extraordinary strength of build she would have been lost.

During this passage of the Atlantic many were the hours whose monotony was unbroken by any phenomenon whatever. The days grew shorter and shorter, and the cold became keen. Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans saw little of Robur. Seated in his cabin, the engineer was busy laying out his course and marking it on his maps, taking his observations whenever he could, recording the readings of his barometers, thermometers, and chronometers, and making full entries in his log-book.

The colleagues wrapped themselves well up and eagerly watched for the sight of land to the southward. At Uncle Prudent's request Frycollin tried to pump the cook as to whither the engineer was bound. But what reliance could be placed on the information given by this Gascon? Sometimes Robur was an ex-minister of the Argentine Republic, sometimes a lord of the Admiralty, sometimes an ex-President of the United States, sometimes a Spanish general temporarily retired, sometimes a Viceroy of the Indies who had sought a more elevated position in the air. Sometimes he possessed millions, thanks to successful razzias in the aeronef, and he had been proclaimed for piracy. Sometimes he had been ruined by making the aeronef, and had been forced to fly aloft to escape from his creditors. As to knowing if he were going to stop anywhere, no! But if he thought of going to the moon, and found there a convenient anchorage, he would anchor there! "Eh! Fry! my boy! That would just suit you to see what was going on up there."

"I shall not go! I refuse!" said the negro, who took all these things seriously.

"And why, Fry, why? You might get married to some pretty bouncing Lunarian!"

Frycollin reported this conversation to his master, who saw it was evident that nothing was to be learnt about

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Robur. And so he thought still more of how he could have his revenge on him.

"Phil," said he one day, "is it quite certain that escape is impossible?"

"Impossible."

"Be it so! But a man is always his own property; and if necessary, by sacrificing his life——"

"If we are to make that sacrifice," said Phil Evans, "the sooner the better. It is almost time to end this. Where is the Albatross going? Here we are flying obliquely over the Atlantic, and if we keep on we shall get to the coast of Patagonia or Tierra del Fuego. And what are we to do then? Get into the Pacific, or go to the continent at the South Pole? Everything is possible with this Robur. We shall be lost in the end. It is thus a case of legitimate self-defence, and if we must perish——"

"Which we shall not do," answered Uncle Prudent, "without being avenged, without annihilating this machine and all she carries."

The colleagues had reached a stage of impotent fury, and were prepared to sacrifice themselves if they could only destroy the inventor and his secret. A few months only would then be the life of this prodigious aeronef, of whose superiority in aerial locomotion they had such convincing proofs! The idea took such hold of them that they thought of nothing else but how to put it into execution. And how? By seizing on some of the explosives on board and simply blowing her up. But could they get at the magazine!

Fortunately for them, Frycollin had no suspicion of their scheme. At the thought of the Albatross exploding in mid-air, he would not have shrunk from betraying his master.

It was on the 23d of July that the land reappeared in the southwest near Cape Virgins at the entrance of the Straits of Magellan. Under the fifty-second parallel at this time of year the night was eighteen hours long and the temperature was six below freezing.

At first the Albatross, instead of keeping on to the south, followed the windings of the coast as if to enter the Pacific. After passing Lomas Bay, leaving Mount Gregory to the north and the Brecknocks to the west, they sighted Puerto Arena, a small Chilian village, at the moment the church-

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bells were in full swing; and a few hours later they were over the old settlement at Port Famine.

If the Patagonians, whose fires could be seen occasionally, were really above the average in stature, the passengers in the aeronef were unable to say, for to them they seemed to be dwarfs. But what a magnificent landscape opened around during these short hours of the southern day! Rugged mountains, peaks eternally capped with snow, with thick forests rising on their flanks, inland seas, bays deep set amid the peninsulas, and islands of the Archipelago. Clarence Island, Dawson Island, and the Land of Desolation, straits and channels, capes and promontories, all in inextricable confusion, and bound by the ice in one solid mass from Cape Forward, the most southerly point of the American continent, to Cape Horn the most southerly point of the New World.

When she reached Port Famine the Albatross resumed her course to the south. Passing between Mount Tarn on the Brunswick Peninsula and Mount Graves, she steered for Mount Sarmiento, an enormous peak wrapped in snow, which commands the Straits of Magellan, rising six thousand four hundred feet from the sea. And now they were over the land of the Fuegians, Tierra del Fuego, the land of fire. Six months later, in the height of summer, with days from fifteen to sixteen hours long, how beautiful and fertile would most of this country be, particularly in its northern portion! Then, all around would be seen valleys and pasturages that could form the feeding-grounds of thousands of animals; then would appear virgin forests, gigantic trees —birches, beeches, ash-trees, cypresses, tree-ferns—and broad plains overrun by herds of guanacos, vicunas, and ostriches. Now there were armies of penguins and myriads of birds; and when the Albatross turned on her electric lamps the guillemots, ducks, and geese came crowding on board enough to fill Tapage's larder a hundred times and more.

Here was work for the cook, who knew how to bring out the flavor of the game and keep down its peculiar oiliness. And here was work for Frycollin in plucking dozen after dozen of such interesting feathered friends.

That day, as the sun was setting about three o'clock in the afternoon, there appeared in sight a large lake framed

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in a border of superb forest. The lake was completely frozen over, and a few natives with long snowshoes on their feet were swiftly gliding over it.

At the sight of the Albatross, the Fuegians, overwhelmed with terror, scattered in all directions, and when they could not get away they hid themselves, taking, like the animals, to the holes in the ground.

The Albatross still held her southerly course, crossing the Beagle Channel, and Navarin Island and Wollaston Island, on the shores of the Pacific. Then, having accomplished 4,700 miles since she left Dahomey, she passed the last islands of the Magellanic archipelago, whose most southerly outpost, lashed by the everlasting surf, is the terrible Cape Horn.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SHIPWRECKED CREW

NEXT day was the 24th of July; and the 24th of July in the southern hemisphere corresponds to the 24th of January in the northern. The fifty-sixth degree of latitude had been left behind. The similar parallel in northern Europe runs through Edinburgh.

The thermometer kept steadily below freezing, so that the machinery was called upon to furnish a little artificial heat in the cabins. Although the days begin to lengthen after the 21st of June in the southern hemisphere, yet the advance of the Albatross towards the Pole more than neutralized this increase, and consequently the daylight became very short. There was thus very little to be seen. At night time the cold became very keen; but as there was no scarcity of clothing on board, the colleagues, well wrapped up, remained a good deal on deck thinking over their plans of escape, and watching for an opportunity. Little was seen of Robur; since the high words that had been exchanged in the Timbuctoo country, the engineer had left off speaking to his prisoners.

Frycollin seldom came out of the cook-house, where Tapage treated him most hospitably, on condition that he acted as his assistant. This position was not without its advantages, and the negro, with his master's permission, very willingly accepted it. Shut up in the galley, he saw

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nothing of what was passing outside, and might even consider himself beyond the reach of danger. He was, in fact, very like the ostrich, not only in his stomach, but in his folly.

But whither went the 'Albatross? Was she in mid-winter bound for the southern seas or continents round the Pole? In this icy atmosphere, even granting that the elements of the batteries were unaffected by such frost, would not all the crew succumb to a horrible death from the cold? That Robur should attempt to cross the Pole in the warm season was bad enough, but to attempt such a thing in the depth of the winter night would be the act of a madman.

Thus reasoned the President and Secretary of the Weldon Institute, now they had been brought to the end of the continent of the New World, which is still America, although it does not belong to the United States.

What was this intractable Robur going to do? Had not the time arrived for them to end the voyage by blowing up the ship?

It was noticed that during the 24th of July the engineer had frequent consultations with his mate. He and Tom Turner kept constant watch on the barometer—not so much to keep themselves informed of the height at which they were traveling as to be on the look-out for a change in the weather. Evidently some indications had been observed of which it was necessary to make careful note.

Uncle Prudent also remarked that Robur had been taking stock of the provisions and stores, and everything seemed to show that he was contemplating turning back.

"Turning back!" said Phil Evans. "But where to?"

"Where he can reprovision the ship," said Uncle Prudent.

"That ought to be in some lonely island in the Pacific with a colony of scoundrels worthy of their chief."

"That is what I think. I fancy he is going west, and with the speed he can get up it would not take him long to get home."

"But we should not be able to put our plan into execution. If we get there——"

"We shall not get there!"

The colleagues had partly guessed the engineer's intentions. During the day it became no longer doubtful that when the Albatross reached the confines of the Antarctic

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Sea her course was to be changed. When the ice has formed about Cape Horn the lower regions of the Pacific are covered with ice-fields and icebergs. The floes then form an impenetrable barrier to the strongest ships and the boldest navigators.

Of course, by increasing the speed of her wings the Albatross could clear the mountain of ice accumulated on the ocean as she could the mountains of earth on the polar continent—if it is a continent that forms the cap of the southern pole. But would she attempt it in the middle of the polar night, in an atmosphere of sixty below freezing?

After she had advanced about a hundred miles to the south the Albatross headed westerly, as if for some unknown island of the Pacific. Beneath her stretched the liquid plain between Asia and America. The waters now had assumed that singular color which has earned for them the name of the Milky Sea. In the half shadow, which the enfeebled rays of the sun were unable to dissipate, the surface of the Pacific was a milky white. It seemed like a vast snowfield, whose undulations were imperceptible at such a height. If the sea had been solidified by the cold, and converted into an immense icefield, its aspect could not have been much different. They knew that the phenomenon was produced by myriads of luminous particles or phosphorescent corpuscles; but it was surprising to come across such an opalescent mass beyond the limits of the Indian Ocean.

Suddenly the barometer fell after keeping somewhat high during the earlier hours of the day. Evidently the indications were such as a shipmaster might feel anxious at, though the master of an aeronef might despise them. There was every sign that a terrible storm had recently raged in the Pacific.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon when Tom Turner came up to the engineer and said, "Do you see that black spot on the horizon, sir—there away to due north of us? That is not a rock?"

"No, Tom; there is no land out there."

"Then it must be a ship or a boat."

Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans, who were in the bow, looked in the direction pointed out by the mate.

Robur asked for the glass and attentively observed the object.

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"It is a boat," said he, "and there are some men in it."

"Shipwrecked?" asked Tom.

"Yes! They have had to abandon their ship, and knowing nothing of the nearest land, are perhaps dying of hunger and thirst! Well, it shall not be said that the Albatross did not come to their help!"

The orders were given, and the aeronef began to sink towards the sea. At three hundred yards from it the descent was stopped, and the propellers drove ahead full speed towards the north.

It was a boat. Her sail flapped against the mast as she rose and fell on the waves. There was no wind, and she was making no progress. Doubtless there was no one on board with strength enough left to work the oars. In the boat were five men asleep or helpless, if they were not dead.

The Albatross had arrived above them, and slowly descended. On the boat's stern was the name of the ship to which she belonged—the *Jeannette* of Nantes.

"Hallo, there!" shouted Turner, loud enough for the men to hear, for the boat was only eighty feet below him.

There was no answer. "Fire a gun!" said Robur.

The gun was fired and the report rang out over the sea.

One of the men looked up feebly. His eyes were haggard and his face was that of a skeleton. As he caught sight of the Albatross he made a gesture as of fear.

"Don't be afraid," said Robur in French, "we have come to help you. Who are you?"

"We belong to the barque *Jeannette*, and I am the mate. We left her a fortnight ago as she was sinking. We have no water and no food."

The four other men had now sat up. Wan and exhausted, in a terrible state of emaciation, they lifted their hands towards the Albatross.

"Look out!" shouted Robur.

A line was let down, and a pail of fresh water was lowered into the boat. The men snatched at it and drank it with an eagerness awful to see.

"Bread, bread!" they exclaimed.

Immediately a basket with some food and five pints of coffee descended towards them. The mate with difficulty restrained them in their ravenousness.

"Where are we?" asked the mate at last.

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"Fifty miles from the Chili coast and the Chonos Archipelago," answered Robur.

"Thanks. But we are becalmed, and——"

"We are going to tow you."

"Who are you?"

"People who are glad to be of assistance to you," said Robur.

The mate understood that the incognito was to be respected. But had the flying machine sufficient power to tow them through the water?

Yes; and the boat, attached to a hundred feet of rope, began to move off towards the east. At ten o'clock at night the land was sighted—or rather they could see the lights which indicated its position. This rescue from the sky had come just in time for the survivors of the *Jeannette*, and they had good reason to believe it miraculous.

When they had been taken to the mouth of the channel leading among the Chonos Islands, Robur shouted to them to cast off the tow-line. This, with many a blessing to those who had saved them, they did, and the Albatross headed out to the offing.

Certainly there was some good in this aernoef, which could thus help those who were lost at sea! What balloon, perfect as it might be, would be able to perform such a service? And between themselves Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans could not but admit it, although they were quite disposed to deny the evidence of their senses.

CHAPTER XVIII

OVER THE VOLCANO

THE sea was as rough as ever, and the symptoms became alarming. The barometer fell several millimeters. The wind came in violent gusts, and then for a moment or so failed altogether. Under such circumstances a sailing vessel would have had two reefs in her topsails and a reef in her foresail. Everything showed that the wind was rising in the northwest. The storm-glass became much troubled and its movements were most disquieting.

At one o'clock in the morning the wind came on again with extreme violence. Although the aeronef was going

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right in its teeth she was still making progress at a rate of from twelve to fifteen miles an hour. But that was the utmost she could do.

Evidently preparations must be made for a cyclone, a very rare occurrence in these latitudes. Whether it be called a hurricane, as in the Atlantic, a typhoon, as in Chinese waters, a simoom, as in the Sahara, or a tornado, as on the western coast, such a storm is always a gyratory one, and most dangerous for any ship caught in the current which increases from the circumference to the center, and has only one spot of calm, the middle of the vortex.

Robur knew this. He also knew it was best to escape from the cyclone and get beyond its zone of attraction by ascending to the higher strata. Up to then he had always succeeded in doing this, but now he had not an hour, perhaps not a minute, to lose.

In fact the violence of the wind sensibly increased. The crests of the waves were swept off as they rose and blown into white dust on the surface of the sea. It was manifest that the cyclone was advancing with fearful velocity straight towards the regions of the pole.

"Higher!" said Robur.

"Higher it is," said Tom Turner.

An extreme ascensional power was communicated to the aeronef, and she shot up slantingly as if she was traveling on a plane sloping downwards from the southwest. Suddenly the barometer fell more than a dozen millimeters and the Albatross paused in her ascent.

What was the cause of the stoppage? Evidently she was pulled back by the air; some formidable current had diminished the resistance to the screws. When a steamer travels up stream more work is got out of her screw than when the water is running between the blades. The recoil is then considerable, and may perhaps be as great as the current. It was thus with the Albatross at this moment.

But Robur was not the man to give in. His seventy-four screws, working perfectly together, were driven at their maximum speed. But the aeronef could not escape; the attraction of the cyclone was irresistible. During the few moments of calm she began to ascend, but the heavy pull soon drew her back, and she sunk like a ship as she founders.

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Evidently if the violence of the cyclone went on increasing the Albatross would be but as a straw caught in one of those whirlwinds that root up the trees, carry off roofs, and blow down walls.

Robur and Tom could only speak by signs. Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans clung to the rail and wondered if the cyclone was not playing their game in destroying the aeronef and with her the inventor, and with the inventor the secret of his invention.

But if the Albatross could not get out of the cyclone vertically could she not do something else? Could she not gain the center, where it was comparatively calm, and where they would have more control over her? Quite so; but to do this she would have to break through the circular currents which were sweeping her round with them. Had she sufficient mechanical power to escape through them?

Suddenly the upper part of the cloud fell in. The vapor condensed in torrents of rain. It was two o'clock in the morning. The barometer, oscillating over a range of twelve millimeters, had now fallen to 27.91, and from this something should be taken on account of the height of the aeronef above the level of the sea.

Strange to say, the cyclone was out of the zone to which such storms are generally restricted, such zone being bounded by the thirtieth parallel of north latitude and the twenty-sixth parallel of south latitude. This may perhaps explain why the eddying storm suddenly turned into a straight one. But what a hurricane! The tempest in Connecticut on the 22d of March, 1882, could only have been compared to it, and the speed of that was more than three hundred miles an hour.

The Albatross had thus to fly before the wind or rather she had to be left to be driven by the current, from which she could neither mount nor escape. But in following this unchanging trajectory she was bearing due south, towards those polar regions which Robur had endeavored to avoid. And now he was no longer master of her course; she would go where the hurricane took her.

Tom Turner was at the helm, and it required all his skill to keep her straight. In the first hours of the morning—if we can so call the vague tint which began to rise over the horizon—the Albatross was fifteen degrees below Cape

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Horn; twelve hundred miles more and she would cross the antarctic circle. Where she was, in this month of July, the night lasted nineteen hours and a half. The sun's disk—without warmth, without light—only appeared above the horizon to disappear almost immediately. At the pole the night lengthened into one of a hundred and seventy-nine hours. Everything showed that the Albatross was about to plunge into an abyss.

During the day an observation, had it been possible, would have given 66° 40′ south latitude. The aeronef was within fourteen hundred miles of the pole.

Irresistibly was she drawn towards this inaccessible corner of the globe, her speed eating up, so to speak, her weight, although she weighed less than before, owing to the flattening of the earth at the pole. It seemed as though she could have dispensed altogether with her suspensory screws. And soon the fury of the storm reached such a height that Robur thought it best to reduce the speed of her helices as much as possible, so as to avoid disaster. And only enough speed was given to keep the aeronef under control of the rudder.

Amid these dangers the engineer retained his imperturbable coolness, and the crew obeyed him as if their leader's mind had entered into them. Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans had not for a moment left the deck; they could remain without being disturbed. The air made but slight resistance. The aeronef was like an aerostat, which drifts with the fluid mass in which it is plunged.

Is the domain of the southern pole a continent or an archipelago? Or is it a palæocrystic sea, whose ice melts not even during the long summer? We know not. But what we do know is that the southern pole is colder than the northern one—a phenomenon due to the position of the earth in its orbit during winter in the antarctic regions.

During this day there was nothing to show that the storm was abating. It was by the seventy-fifth meridian to the west that the Albatross crossed into the circumpolar region. By what meridian would she come out—if she ever came out?

As she descended more to the south the length of the day diminished. Before long she would be plunged in that continuous night which is illuminated only by the rays of the moon or the pale streamers of the aurora. But the

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moon was then new, and the companions of Robur might see nothing of the regions whose secret has hitherto defied human curiosity.

There was not much inconvenience on board from the cold, for the temperature was not nearly so low as was expected. It seemed as though the hurricane was a sort of Gulf Stream, carrying a certain amount of heat along with it.

Great was the regret that the whole region was in such profound obscurity. Even if the moon had been in full glory but few observations could have been made. At this season of the year an immense curtain of snow, an icy carapace, covers up the polar surface. There was none of that ice "blink" to be seen, that whitish tint of which the reflection is absent from dark horizons. Under such circumstances how could they distinguish the shape of the ground, the extent of the seas, the position of the islands? How could they recognize the hydrographic network of the country or the orographic configuration, and distinguish the hills and mountains from the icebergs and floes?

A little after midnight an aurora illuminated the darkness. With its silver fringes and spangles radiating over space, it seemed like a huge fan open over half the sky. Its farthest electric effluences were lost in the Southern Cross, whose four bright stars were gleaming overhead. The phenomenon was one of incomparable magnificence, and the light showed the face of the country as a confused mass of white.

It need not be said that they had approached so near to the pole that the compass was constantly affected, and gave no precise indication of the course pursued. Its inclination was such that at one time Robur felt certain they were passing over the magnetic pole discovered by Sir James Ross. And an hour later, in calculating the angle the needle made with the vertical, he exclaimed: "The South Pole is beneath us!"

A white cap appeared, but nothing could be seen of what it hid under its ice.

A few minutes afterwards the aurora died away, and the point where all the world's meridians cross is still to be discovered.

If Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans wished to bury in the most mysterious solitudes the aeronef and all she bore, the

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moment was propitious. If they did not do so it was doubtless because the explosive they required was still denied to them.

The hurricane still raged, and swept along with such rapidity that had a mountain been met with the aeronef would have been dashed to pieces like a ship on a lee shore. Not only had the power gone to steer her horizontally, but the control of her elevation had also vanished.

And it was not unlikely that mountains did exist in these antarctic lands. Any instant a shock might happen which would destroy the Albatross. Such a catastrophe became more probable as the wind shifted more to the east after they passed the prime meridian. Two luminous points then showed themselves ahead of the Albatross. These were the two volcanos of the Ross Mountains—Erebus and Terror. Was the Albatross to be shriveled up in their flames like a gigantic butterfly?

An hour of intense excitement followed. One of the volcanoes, Erebus, seemed to be rushing at the aeronef, which could not move from the bed of the hurricane. The cloud of flame grew as they neared it. A network of fire barred their road. A brilliant light shone round over all. The figures on board stood out in the bright light as if come from another world. Motionless, without a sound or a gesture, they waited for the terrible moment when the furnace would wrap them in its fires.

But the storm that bore the Albatross saved them from such a fearful fate. The flames of Erebus were blown down by the hurricane as it passed, and the Albatross flew over unhurt. She swept through a hail of ejected material, which was fortunately kept at bay by the centrifugal action of the suspensory screws. And she harmlessly passed over the crater while it was in full eruption.

An hour afterwards the horizon hid from their view the two colossal torches which light the confines of the world during the long polar night.

At two o'clock in the morning Balleny Island was sighted on the coast of Discovery Land, though it could not be recognized owing to its being bound to the mainland by a cement of ice.

And the Albatross emerged from the polar circle on the hundred and seventy-fifth meridian. The hurricane had

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carried her over the icebergs and icefloes, against which she was in danger of being dashed a hundred times or more. She was not in the hands of the helmsman, but in the hand of God—and God is a good pilot.

The aeronef sped along to the north, and at the sixtieth parallel the storm showed signs of dying away. Its violence sensibly diminished. The Albatross began to come under control again. And, what was a great comfort, had again entered the lighted regions of the globe; and the day reappeared about eight o'clock in the morning.

Robur had been carried by the storm into the Pacific over the polar region, accomplishing four thousand three hundred and fifty miles in nineteen hours, or about three miles a minute, a speed almost double that which the Albatross was equal to with her propellers under ordinary circumstances. But he did not know where he then was owing to the disturbance of the needle in the neighborhood of the magnetic pole, and he would have to wait till the sun shone out under convenient conditions for observation. Unfortunately, heavy clouds covered the sky all that day and the sun did not appear.

This was a disappointment more keenly felt as both propelling screws had sustained damage during the tempest. Robur, much disconcerted at this accident, could only advance at a moderate speed during this day, and when he passed over the antipodes of Paris was only going about eighteen miles an hour. It was necessary not to aggravate the damage to the screws, for if the propellers were rendered useless the situation of the aeronef above the vast seas of the Pacific would be a very awkward one. And the engineer began to consider if he could not effect his repairs on the spot, so as to make sure of continuing his voyage.

In the morning of the 27th of July, about seven o'clock, land was sighted to the north. It was soon seen to be an island. But which island was it of the thousands that dot the Pacific? However, Robur decided to stop at it without landing. He thought that he could repair damages during the day and start in the evening.

The wind had died away completely, and this was a favorable circumstance for the maneuver he desired to execute. At least, if she did not remain stationary the Albatross would be carried he knew not where.

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A cable one hundred and fifty feet long with an anchor at the end was dropped overboard. When the aeronef reached the shore of the island the anchor dragged up the first few rocks and then got firmly fixed between two large blocks. The cable then stretched to full length under the influence of the suspensory screws, and the Albatross remained motionless, riding like a ship in a roadstead.

It was the first time she had been fastened to the earth since she left Philadelphia.

CHAPTER XIX

ANCHORED AT LAST

WHEN the Albatross was high in the air the island could be seen to be of moderate size. But on what parallel was it situated? What meridian ran through it? Was it an island in the Pacific, in Australasia, or in the Indian Ocean? When the sun appeared, and Robur had taken his observations, they would know; but although they could not trust to the indications of the compass there was reason to think they were in the Pacific.

At this height—one hundred and fifty feet—the island which measured about fifteen miles round, was like a three-pointed star in the sea.

Off the southwest point was an islet and a range of rocks. On the shore there were no tide-marks, and this tended to confirm Robur in his opinion as to his position for the ebb and flow are almost imperceptible in the Pacific.

At the northwest point there was a conical mountain about two hundred feet high.

No natives were to be seen, but they might be on the opposite coast. In any case, if they had perceived the aeronef, terror had made them either hide themselves or run away.

The Albatross had anchored on the southwest point of the island. Not far off, down a little creek, a small river flowed in among the rocks. Beyond were several winding valleys; trees of different kinds; and birds—partridges and bustards—in great numbers. If the island was not inhabited it was habitable. Robur might surely have landed on it; if he had not done so it was probably because the

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ground was uneven and did not offer a convenient spot to beach the aeronef.

While he was waiting for the sun the engineer began the repairs he reckoned on completing before the day was over. The suspensory screws were undamaged and had worked admirably amid all the violence of the storm, which, as we have said, had considerably lightened their work. At this moment half of them were in action, enough to keep the Albatross fixed to the shore by the taut cable. But the two propellers had suffered, and more than Robur had thought. Their blades would have to be adjusted and the gearing seen to by which they received their rotatory movement.

It was the screw at the bow which was first attacked under Robur's superintendence. It was the best to commence with, in case the Albatross had to leave before the work was finished. With only this propeller he could easily keep a proper course.

Meanwhile Uncle Prudent and his colleague, after walking about the deck, had sat down aft. Frycollin was strangely reassured. What a difference! To be suspended only one hundred and fifty feet from the ground!

The work was only interrupted for a moment while the elevation of the sun above the horizon allowed Robur to take an horary angle, so that at the time of its culmination he could calculate his position.

The result of the observation, taken with the greatest exactitude, was as follows:

Longitude, 176 deg. 10 min. west.
Latitude, 44 deg. 25 min. south.

This point on the map answered to the position of the Chatham Islands, and particularly of Pitt Island, one of the group.

"That is nearer than I supposed," said Robur to Tom Turner.

"How far off are we?"

"Forty-six degrees south of X Island, or two thousand eight hundred miles."

"All the more reason to get our propellers into order," said the mate. "We may have the wind against us this passage, and with the little stores we have left we ought to get to X as soon as possible."

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"Yes, Tom, and I hope to get under way to-night, even if I go with one screw, and put the other to-rights on the voyage."

"Mr. Robur," said Tom, "what is to be done with those two gentlemen and their servant?"

"Do you think they would complain if they became colonists of X Island?"

But where was this X? It was an island lost in the immensity of the Pacific Ocean between the Equator and the Tropic of Cancer—an island most appropriately named by Robur in this algebraic fashion. It was in the north of the South Pacific, a long way out of the route of inter-oceanic communication. There it was that Robur had founded his little colony, and there the Albatross rested when tired with her flight. There she was provisioned for all her voyages. In X Island, Robur, a man of immense wealth, had established a ship-yard, in which he built his areonef. There he could repair it, and even rebuild it. In his warehouses were materials and provisions of all sorts stored for the fifty inhabitants who lived on the island.

When Robur had doubled Cape Horn a few days before his intention had been to regain X Island by crossing the Pacific obliquely. But the cyclone had seized the Albatross, and the hurricane had carried her away to the south. In fact, he had been brought back to much the same latitude as before, and if his propellers had not been damaged the delay would have been of no importance.

His object was therefore to get back to X Island; but as the mate had said, the voyage would be a long one, and the winds would probably be against them. The mechanical power of the Albatross was, however, quite equal to taking her to her destination, and under ordinary circumstances she would be there in three or four days.

Hence Robur's resolve to anchor on the Chatham Islands. There was there every opportunity for repairing at least the fore-screw. He had no fear that if the wind were to rise he would be driven to the south instead of to the north. When night came the repairs would be finished, and he would have to maneuver so as to weigh anchor. If it were too firmly fixed in the rocks he could cut the cable and resume his flight towards the equator.

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The crew of the Albatross, knowing there was no time to lose, set to work vigorously.

While they were busy in the bow of the aeronef, Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans held a little conversation together which had exceptionally important consequences.

"Phil Evans," said Uncle Prudent, "you have resolved, as I have, to sacrifice your life?"

"Yes, like you."

"It is evident that we can expect nothing from Robur."

"Nothing."

"Well, Phil Evans, I have made up my mind. If the Albatross leaves this place to-night, the night will not pass without our having accomplished our task. We will smash the wings of this bird of Robur's! This night I will blow it into the air!"

"The sooner the better," said Phil Evans.

It will be seen that the two colleagues were agreed on all points, even in accepting with indifference the frightful death in store for them. "Have you all you want?" asked Evans.

"Yes. Last night, while Robur and his people had enough to do to look after the safety of the ship, I slipped into the magazine and got hold of a dynamite cartridge."

"Let us set to work, Uncle Prudent."

"No. Wait till to-night. When the night comes we will go into our cabin, and you shall see something that will surprise you."

At six o'clock the colleagues dined together as usual. Two hours afterwards they retired to their cabin like men who wished to make up for a sleepless night.

Neither Robur nor any of his companions had a suspicion of the catastrophe that threatened the Albatross.

This was Uncle Prudent's plan. As he had said, he had stolen into the magazine, and there had possessed himself of some powder and cartridge like those used by Robur in Dahomey. Returning to his cabin, he had carefully concealed the cartridge with which he had resolved to blow up the Albatross in mid-air.

Phil Evans, screened by his companion, was now examining the infernal machine, which was a metallic canister containing about two pounds of dynamite, enough to shatter the aeronef to atoms. If the explosion did not destroy

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her at once, it would do so in her fall. Nothing was easier than to place this cartridge in a corner of the cabin, so that it would blow in the deck and tear away the framework of the hull.

But to obtain the explosion it was necessary to adjust the fulminating cap with which the cartridge was fitted. This was the most delicate part of the operation, for the explosion would have to be carefuly timed, so as not to occur too soon or too late.

Uncle Prudent had carefully thought over the matter. His conclusions were as follows. As soon as the fore propeller was repaired the aeronef would resume her course to the north, and that done Robur and his crew would probably come aft to put the other screw into order. The presence of these people about the cabin might interfere with his plans, and so he had resolved to make a slow match do duty as a time-fuse.

"When I got the cartridge," said he to Phil Evans, "I took some gunpowder as well. With the powder I will make a fuse that will take some time to burn, and which will lead into the fulminate. My idea is to light it about midnight, so that the explosion will take place about three or four o'clock in the morning."

"Well planned!" said Phil Evans.

The colleagues, as we see, had arrived at such a stage as to look with the greatest nonchalance on the awful destruction in which they were about to perish. Their hatred against Robur and his people had so increased that they would sacrifice their own lives to destroy the Albatross and all she bore. The act was that of madmen, it was horrible; but at such a pitch had they arrived after five weeks of anger that could not vent itself, of rage that could not be gratified.

"And Frycollin?" asked Phil Evans, "have we the right to dispose of his life?"

"We shall sacrifice ours as well!" said Uncle Prudent. It is doubtful if Frycollin would have thought the reason sufficient.

Immediately Uncle Prudent set to work, while Evans kept watch in the neighborhood of the cabin. The crew were all at work forward. There was no fear of being surprised. Uncle Prudent began by rubbing a small quantity of the

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powder very fine; and then, having slightly moistened it, he wrapped it up in a piece of rag in the shape of a match. When it was lighted he calculated it would burn about an inch in five minutes, or a yard in three hours. The match was tried and found to answer, and was then wound round with string and attached to the cap of the cartridge. Uncle Prudent had all finished about ten o'clock in the evening without having excited the least suspicion.

During the day the work on the fore screw had been actively carried on, but it had had to be taken on board to adjust the twisted blades. Of the piles and accumulators and the machinery that drove the ship nothing was damaged.

When night fell Robur and his men knocked off work. The fore propeller had not been got into place, and to finish it would take another three hours. After some conversation with Tom Turner it was decided to give the crew a rest, and postpone what required to be done to the next morning.

The final adjustment was a matter of extreme nicety, and the electric lamps did not give so suitable a light for such work as the daylight.

Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans were not aware of this. They had understood that the screw would be in place during the night, and that the Albatross would be on her way to the north.

The night was dark and moonless. Heavy clouds made the darkness deeper. A light breeze began to rise. A few puffs came from the southwest, but they had no effect on the Albatross. She remained motionless at her anchor, and the cable stretched vertically downwards to the ground.

Uncle Prudent and his colleague, imagining they were under way again, sat shut up in their cabin, exchanging but a few words, and listening to the f-r-r-r-r of the suspensory screws, which drowned every other sound on board. They were waiting till the time of action arrived.

A little before midnight Uncle Prudent said, "It is time!"

Under the berths in the cabin was a sliding box, forming a small locker, and in this locker Uncle Prudent put the dynamite and the slow-match. In this way the match would burn without betraying itself by its smoke or spluttering. Uncle Prudent lighted the end and pushed back the

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box under the berth with, "Now let us go aft, and wait."

They then went out, and were astonished not to find the steersman at his post.

Phil Evans leant out over the rail.

"The Albatross is where she was," said he in a low voice. "The work is not finished. They have not started!"

Uncle Prudent made a gesture of disappointment. "We shall have to put out the match," said he.

"No," said Phil Evans, "we must escape."

"Escape?"

"Yes! down the cable! fifty yards is nothing!"

"Nothing, of course, Phil Evans, and we should be fools not to take the chance now it has come."

But first they went back to the cabin and took away all they could carry, with a view to a more or less prolonged stay on the Chatham Islands. Then they shut the door and noiselessly crept forward, intending to wake Frycollin and take him with them.

The darkness was intense. The clouds were racing up from the southwest, and the aeronef was tugging at her anchor, and thus throwing the cable more and more out of the vertical. There would be no difficulty in slipping down it.

The colleagues made their way along the deck, stopping in the shadow of the deckhouses to listen if there was any sound. The silence was unbroken. No light shone from the portholes. The aeronef was not only silent; she was asleep.

Uncle Prudent was close to Frycollin's cabin when Phil Evans stopped him. "The look-out!" he said.

A man was crouching near the deck-house. He was only half asleep. All flight would be impossible if he were to give the alarm. Close by were a few ropes, and pieces of rag and waste used in the work at the screw.

An instant afterwards the man was gagged and blindfolded and lashed to the rail unable to utter a sound or move an inch. This was done almost without a whisper.

Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans listened. All was silent within the cabins. Every one on board was asleep. They reached Frycollin's cabin. Tapage was snoring away in a style worthy of his name, and that promised well.

To his great surprise, Uncle Prudent had not even to

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push Frycollin's door. It was open. He stepped into the doorway and looked round. "Nobody here!" he said.

"Nobody! Where can he be?" asked Phil Evans.

They went into the bow, thinking Frycollin might perhaps be asleep in the corner. Still they found nobody.

"Has the fellow got the start of us?" asked Uncle Prudent.

"Whether he has or not," said Phil Evans, "we can't wait any longer. Down you go."

Without hesitation the fugitives one after the other clambered over the side and, seizing the cable with hands and feet, slipped down it safe and sound to the ground.

Think of their joy at again treading the earth they had lost for so long—at walking on solid ground and being no longer the playthings of the atmosphere!

They were starting up the creek to the interior of the island when suddenly a form rose in front of them. It was Frycollin. The negro had had the same idea as his master and the audacity to start without telling him. But there was no time for recriminations, and Uncle Prudent was in search of a refuge in some distant part of the island when Phil Evans stopped him.

"Uncle Prudent," said he. "Here we are safe from Robur. He is doomed like his companions to a terrible death. He deserves it, we know. But if he would swear on his honor not to take us prisoners again——"

"The honor of such a man——"

Uncle Prudent did not finish his sentence.

There was a noise on the Albatross. Evidently the alarm had been given. The escape was discovered.

"Help! Help!" shouted somebody. It was the look-out man, who had got rid of his gag. Hurried footsteps were heard on deck. Almost immediately the electric lamps shot beams over a large circle.

"There they are! There they are!" shouted Tom Turner. The fugitives were seen.

At the same instant an order was given by Robur, and, the suspensory screws being slowed, the cable was hauled in on board, and the Albatross sank towards the ground.

At this moment the voice of Phil Evans was heard shouting, "Engineer Robur, will you give us your word of honor to leave us free on this island?"

"Never!" said Robur. And the reply was followed by

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the report of a gun, and the bullet grazed Phil's shoulder.

"Ah! The brutes!" said Uncle Prudent. Knife in hand, he rushed towards the rocks where the anchor had fixed itself. The aeronef was not more than fifty feet from the ground.

In a few seconds the cable was cut, and the breeze, which had increased considerably, striking the Albatross on the quarter, carried her out over the sea.

CHAPTER XX

THE WRECK OF THE ALBATROSS

It was then twenty minutes after midnight. Five or six shots had been fired from the aeronef. Uncle Prudent and Frycollin, supporting Phil Evans, had taken shelter among the rocks. They had not been hit. For the moment there was nothing to fear.

As the Albatross drifted off from Pitt Island she rose obliquely to nearly three thousand feet. It was necessary to increase the ascensional power to prevent her falling into the sea.

When the look-out man had got clear of his gag and shouted, Robur and Tom Turner had rushed up to him and torn off his bandage. The mate had then run back to the stern cabin. It was empty! Tapage had searched Frycollin's cabin, and that also was empty.

When he saw that the prisoners had escaped, Robur was seized with a paroxysm of anger. The escape meant the revelation of his secret to the world. He had not been much concerned at the document thrown overboard while they were crossing Europe, for there were so many chances that it would be lost in its fall; but now——!

As he grew calm, "They have escaped," said he. "Be it so! but they cannot get away from Pitt island, and in a day or so I will go back! I will recapture them! And then——"

In fact, the safety of the three fugitives was by no means assured. The Albatross would be repaired, and return well in hand. Before the day was out they might again be in the power of the engineer.

Before the day was out! But in two hours the Al-

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batross would be annihilated! The dynamite cartridge was like a torpedo fastened to her hull, and would accomplish her destruction in mid-air. The breeze freshened, and the aeronef was carried to the northeast. Although her speed was but moderate, she would be out of sight of the Chatham Islands before sunrise. To return against the wind she must have her propellers going, particularly the one in the bow.

"Tom," said the engineer, "turn the lights full on."

"Yes, sir."

"And all hands to work."

"Yes, sir."

There was no longer any idea of putting off the work till to-morrow. There was now no thought of fatigue. Not one of the men of the Albatross failed to share in the feelings of his chief. Not one but was ready to do anything to recapture the fugitives!

As soon as the screw was in place they would return to the island and drop another anchor, and give chase to the fugitives. Then only would they begin repairing the stern-screw; and then the aeronef could resume her voyage across the Pacific to X Island.

It was important, above all things, that the Albatross should not be carried too far to the northeast, but unfortunately the breeze grew stronger, and she could not head against it, or even remain stationary. Deprived of her propellers she was an unguidable balloon. The fugitives on the shore knew that she would have disappeared before the explosion blew her to pieces.

Robur felt much disappointment at seeing his plans so interfered with. Would it not take him much longer than he thought to get back to his old anchorage?

While the work at the screw was actively pushed on, he resolved to descend to the surface of the sea, in the hope that the wind would there be lighter. Perhaps the Albatross would be able to remain in the neighborhood until she was again fit to work to windward.

The maneuver was instantly executed. If a passing ship had sighted the aerial machine as she sunk through the air, with her electric lights in full blaze, with what terror would she have been seized!

When the Albatross was a few hundred feet from the waves she stopped. Unfortunately Robur found that the

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breeze was stronger here than above, and the aeronef drifted off more rapidly. He risked being blown a long way off to the northeast, and that would delay his return to Pitt Island.

In short, after several experiments, he found it better to keep his ship well up in the air, and the Albatross went aloft to about ten thousand feet. There, if she did not remain stationary, the drifting was very slight. The engineer could thus hope that by sunrise at such an altitude he would still be in sight of the island.

Robur did not trouble himself about the reception the fugitives might have received from the natives—if there were any natives. That they might help them mattered little to him. With the powers of offence possessed by the Albatross they would be promptly terrified and dispersed. The capture of the prisoners was certain, and once he had them again, "They will not escape from X Island!"

About one o'clock in the morning the fore-screw was finished, and all that had to be done was to get it back to its place. This would take about an hour. That done, the Albatross would be headed southwest and the stern-screw could be taken in hand.

And how about the match that was burning in the deserted cabin?—the match of which more than a third was now consumed? And the spark that was creeping along to the dynamite?

Assuredly if the men of the aeronef had not been so busy one of them would have heard the feeble sputtering that was going on in the deck-house. Perhaps he would have smelt the burning powder! He would doubtless have become uneasy! And told Tom Turner! And then they would have looked about, and found the box and the infernal machine; and then there would have been time to save this wonderful Albatross and all she bore!

But the men were at work in the bow, twenty yards away from the cabin. Nothing brought them to that part of the deck; nothing called off their attention from their work.

Robur was there working with his hands, excellent mechanic as he was. He hurried on the work, but nothing was neglected, everything was carefully done. Was it not necessary that he should again become absolute master of his invention? If he did not recapture the fugitives

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they would get away home. They would begin inquiring into matters. They might even discover X Island, and there would be an end to this life, which the men of the Albatross had created for themselves, a life that seemed superhuman and sublime.

Tom Turner came up to the engineer. It was a quarter past one. "It seems to me, sir, that the breeze is falling, and going round to the west."

"What does the barometer say?" asked Robur, after looking up at the sky.

"It is almost stationary, and the clouds seem gathering below us."

"So they are, and it may be raining down at the sea; but if we keep above the rain it makes no difference to us. It will not interfere with the work."

"If it is raining it is not a heavy rain," said Tom. "The clouds do not look like it, and probably the wind has dropped altogether."

"Perhaps so, but I think we had better not go down yet. Let us get into going order as soon as we can, and then we can do as we like."

At a few minutes after two the first part of the work was finished. The fore-screw was in its place, and the power was turned on. The speed was gradually increased, and the Albatross, heading to the southwest, returned at moderate speed towards the Chatham Islands.

"Tom," said Robur, "it is about two hours and a half since we got adrift. The wind has not changed all the time. I think we ought to be over the island in an hour."

"Yes, sir. We are going about forty feet a second. We ought to be there about half-past three."

"All the better. It would suit us best to get back while it is dark, and even beach the Albatross if we can. Those fellows will fancy we are a long way off to the northward, and never think of keeping a look-out. If we have to stop a day or two on the island——"

"We'll stop, and if we have to fight an army of natives——"

"We'll fight," said Robur. "We'll fight then for our Albatross."

The engineer went forward to the men, who were waiting for orders. "My lads," he said to them, "we cannot knock off yet. We must work till day comes."

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They were all ready to do so. The stern-screw had now to be treated as the other had been. The damage was the same, a twisting from the violence of the hurricane during the passage across the southern pole.

But to get the screw on board it seemed best to stop the progress of the aeronef for a few minutes, and even to drive her backwards. The engines were reversed. The aeronef began to fall astern, when Tom Turner was surprised by a peculiar odor.

This was from the gas given off by the match, which had accumulated in the box, and was now escaping from the cabin. "Hallo!" said the mate, with a sniff.

"What is the matter?" asked Robur.

"Don't you smell something? Isn't it burning powder?"

"So it is, Tom."

"And it comes from that cabin."

"Yes, the very cabin——"

"Have those scoundrels set it on fire?"

"Suppose it is something else!" exclaimed Robur. "Force the door, Tom; drive in the door!"

But the mate had not made one step towards it when a fearful explosion shook the Albatross. The cabins flew into splinters. The lamps went out. The electric current suddenly failed. The darkness was complete. Most of the suspensory screws were twisted or broken, but a few in the bow still revolved.

At the same instant the hull of the aeronef opened just behind the first deck-house, where the engines for the fore-screw were placed; and the after-part of the deck collapsed in space.

Immediately the last suspensory screw stopped spinning, and the Albatross dropped into the abyss.

It was a fall of ten thousand feet for the eight men who were clinging to the wreck; and the fall was even faster than it might have been, for the fore propeller was vertical in the air and still working!

It was then that Robur, with extraordinary coolness, climbed up to the broken deck-house, and seizing the lever reversed the rotation, so that the propeller became a suspender.

The fall continued, but it was checked, and the wreck

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did not fall with the accelerating swiftness of bodies influenced solely by gravitation; and if it was death to the survivors of the Albatross from their being hurled into the sea, it was not death by asphyxia amid air which the rapidity of descent rendered unbreathable.

Eighty seconds after the explosion, all that remained of the Albatross plunged into the waves!

CHAPTER XXI
THE INSTITUTE AGAIN

Some weeks before, on the 13th of June, on the morning after the sitting during which the Weldon Institute had been given over to such stormy discussions, the excitement of all classes of the Philadelphian population, black or white, had been much easier to imagine than to describe.

From a very early hour conversation was entirely occupied with the unexpected and scandalous incident of the night before. A stranger calling himself an engineer, and answering to the name of Robur, a person of unknown origin, of anonymous nationality, had unexpectedly presented himself in the club-room, insulted the balloonists, made fun of the aeronauts, boasted of the marvels of machines heavier than air, and raised a frightful tumult by the remarks with which he greeted the menaces of his adversaries. After leaving the desk, amid a volley of revolver shots, he had disappeared, and, in spite of every endeavor, no trace could be found of him.

Assuredly here was enough to exercise every tongue and excite every imagination. But by how much was this excitement increased when in the evening of the 13th of June it was found that neither the president nor secretary of the Weldon Institute had returned to their homes! Was it by chance only that they were absent? No, or at least there was nothing to lead people to think so. It had even been agreed that in the morning they would be back at the club, one as president, the other as secretary, to take their places during a discussion on the events of the preceding evening.

And not only was there the complete disappearance of these two considerable personages in the state of Penn-

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sylvania, but there was no news of the valet Frycollin. He was as undiscoverable as his master. Never had a negro since Toussaint L'Ouverture, Soulouque, or Dessaline had so much talked about him.

The next day there was no news. Neither the colleagues nor Frycollin had been found. The anxiety became serious. Agitation commenced. A numerous crowd besieged the post and telegraph offices in case any news should be received. There was no news.

And they had been seen coming out of the Weldon Institute loudly talking together, and with Frycollin in attendance, go down Walnut Street towards Fairmont Park! Jem Chip, the vegetarian, had even shaken hands with the president and left him with "To-morrow!"

And William T. Forbes, the manufacturer of sugar from rags, had received a cordial shake from Phil Evans who had said to him twice, "Au revoir! au revoir!"

Miss Doll and Miss Mat Forbes, so attached to Uncle Prudent by the bonds of purest friendship, could not get over the disappearance, and in order to obtain news of the absent, talked even more than they were accustomed to.

Three, four, five, six days passed. Then a week, then two weeks, and there was nothing to give a clue to the missing three. The most minute search had been made in every quarter. Nothing! In the streets going down to the harbor. Nothing! In the park, even under the trees and brushwood. Nothing! Always nothing! although here it was noticed that the grass looked to be pressed down in a way that seemed suspicious and certainly was inexplicable; and at the edge of the clearing there were traces of a recent struggle. Perhaps a band of scoundrels had attacked the colleagues here in the deserted park in the middle of the night!

It was possible. The police proceeded with their inquiries in all due form and with all lawful slowness. They dragged the Schuylkill river, and cut into the thick bushes that fringe its banks; and if this was useless it was not quite a waste, for the Schuylkill is in great want of a good weeding, and it got it on this occasion! Practical people are the authorities of Philadelphia!

Then the newspapers were tried. Advertisements and notices and articles were sent to all the journals in the

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Union without distinction of color. The *Daily Negro,* the special organ of the black race, published a portrait of Frycollin after his latest photograph. Rewards were offered to whoever would give news of the three absentees, and even to those who would find some clue to put the police on the track.

"Five thousand dollars! five thousand dollars to any citizen who would——"

Nothing was done. The five thousand dollars remained with the treasurer of the Weldon Institute.

Undiscoverable! undiscoverable! undiscoverable! Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans, of Philadelphia!

It need hardly be said that the club was put to serious inconvenience by this disappearance of its president and secretary. And at first the assembly voted urgency to a measure which suspended the work on the Go-ahead. How, in the absence of the principal promoters of the affair, of those who had devoted to the enterprise a certain part of their fortune in time and money—how could they finish the work when these were not present? It were better, then, to wait.

And just then came the first news of the strange phenomenon which had exercised people's minds some weeks before.

The mysterious object had been again seen at different times in the higher regions of the atmosphere. But nobody dreamt of establishing a connection between this singular reappearance and the no less singular disappearance of the members of the Weldon Institute. In fact, it would have required a very strong dose of imagination to connect one of these facts with the other.

Whatever it might be, asteroid or aerolite or aerial monster, it had reappeared in such a way that its dimensions and shape could be much better appreciated, first in Canada, over the country between Ottawa and Quebec, on the very morning after the disappearance of the colleagues, and later over the plains of the Far West, where it had tried its speed against an express train on the Union Pacific.

At the end of this day the doubts of the learned world were at an end. The body was not a product of nature, it was a flying machine, the practical application of the theory of "heavier than air." And if the inventor of the aeronef

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had wished to keep himself unknown he could evidently have done better than to try it over the Far West. As to the mechanical force he required, or the engines by which it was communicated, nothing was known, but there could be no doubt the aeronef was gifted with an extraordinary faculty of locomotion. In fact, a few days afterwards it was reported from the Celestial Empire, then from the southern part of India, then from the Russian steppes.

Who was then this bold mechanician that possessed such powers of locomotion, for whom States had no frontiers and oceans no limits, who disposed of the terrestrial atmosphere as if it were his domain? Could it be this Robur whose theories had been so brutally thrown in the face of the Weldon Institute the day he led the attack against the utopia of guidable balloons? Perhaps such a notion occurred to some of the wide-awake people, but none dreamt that the said Robur had anything to do with the disappearance of the president and secretary of the Institute.

Things remained in this state of mystery when a telegram arrived from France through the New York cable at 11.37 A. M. on July 13. And what was this telegram? It was the text of the document found at Paris in a snuff-box revealing what had happened to the two personages for whom the Union was in mourning.

So, then, the perpetrator of this kidnapping was Robur the engineer, come expressly to Philadelphia to destroy in its egg the theory of the balloonists. He it was who commanded the Albatross! He it was who carried off by way of reprisal Uncle Prudent, Phil Evans, and Frycollin; and they might be considered lost for ever. At least until some means were found of constructing an engine capable of contending with this powerful machine their terrestrial friends would never bring them back to earth.

What excitement! What stupor! The telegram from Paris had been addressed to the members of the Weldon Institute. The members of the club were immediately informed of it. Ten minutes later all Philadelphia received the news through its telephones, and in less than an hour all America heard of it through the innumerable electric wires of the new continent.

No one would believe it! "It is an unseasonable joke,"

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said some. "It is all smoke," said others. How could such a thing be done in Philadelphia, and so secretly, too? How could the Albatross have been beached in Fairmont Park without its appearance having been signaled all over Pennsylvania?

Very good. These were the arguments. The incredulous had the right of doubting. But the right did not last long. Seven days after the receipt of the telegram the French mail-boat *Normandie* came into the Hudson, bringing the famous snuff-box. The railway took it in all haste from New York to Philadelphia.

It was indeed the snuff-box of the President of the Weldon Institute. Jem Chip would have done better on that day to take some more substantial nourishment, for he fell into a swoon when he recognized it. How many a time had he taken from it the pinch of friendship! And Miss Doll and Miss Mat also recognized it, and so did William T. Forbes, Truck Milnor, Bat T. Fynn, and many other members. And not only was it the president's snuff-box, it was the president's writing.

Then did the people lament and stretch out their hands in despair to the skies. Uncle Prudent and his colleague carried away in a flying machine, and no one able to deliver them!

The Niagara Falls Company, in which Uncle Prudent was the largest shareholder, thought of suspending its business and turning off its cataracts. The Wheelton Watch Company thought of winding up its machinery now it had lost its manager.

Nothing more was heard of the aeronef. July passed, and there was no news. August ran its course, and the uncertainty on the subject of Robur's prisoners was as great as ever. Had he, like Icarus, fallen a victim to his own temerity?

The first twenty-seven days of September went by without result, but on the 28th a rumor spread through Philadelphia that Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans had during the afternoon quietly walked into the president's house. And, what was more extraordinary, the rumor was true, although very few believed it.

They had, however, to give in to the evidence. There could be no doubt these were the two men, and not their

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shadows. And Frycollin also had come back! The members of the club, then their friends, then the crowd, swarmed into the president's house, and shook hands with the president and secretary, and cheered them again and again. Jem Chip was there, having left his luncheon—a joint of boiled lettuces—and William T. Forbes and his daughters, and all the members of the club. It is a mystery how Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans emerged alive from the thousands who welcomed them.

On that evening was the weekly meeting of the Institute. It was expected that the colleagues would take their places at the desk. As they had said nothing of their adventures, it was thought they would then speak, and relate the impressions of their voyage. But for some reason or other both were silent. And so also was Frycollin, whom his congeners in their delirium had failed to dismember.

But though the colleagues did not tell what had happened to them, that is no reason why we should not. We know what occurred on the night of the 27th and 28th of July; the daring escape to the earth, the scramble among the rocks, the bullet fired at Phil Evans, the cut cable, and the Albatross deprived of her propellers, drifting off to the northeast at a great altitude. Her electric lamps rendered her visible for some time. And then she disappeared.

The fugitives had little to fear. How could Robur get back to the island for three or four hours if his screws were out of gear? By that time the Albatross would have been destroyed by the explosion, and be no more than a wreck floating on the sea; those whom she bore would be mangled corpses, which the ocean would not even give up again. The act of vengeance would be accomplished.

Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans looked upon it as an act of legitimate self-defence, and felt no remorse whatever. Evans was but slightly wounded by the rifle bullet, and the three made their way up from the shore in the hope of meeting some of the natives. The hope was realized. About fifty natives were living by fishing off the western coast. They had seen the aeronef descend on the island, and they welcomed the fugitives as if they were supernatural beings. They worshiped them, we ought rather to say. They accommodated them in the most comfortable of their huts.

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As they had expected, Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans saw nothing more of the areonef. They concluded that the catastrophe had taken place in some high region of the atmosphere, and that they would hear no more of Robur and his prodigious machine.

Meanwhile they had to wait for an opportunity of returning to America. The Chatham Islands are not much visited by navigators, and all August passed without sign of a ship. The fugitives began to ask themselves if they had not exchanged one prison for another.

At last, a ship came to water at the Chatham Islands. It will not have been forgotten that when Uncle Prudent was seized he had on him several thousand paper dollars, much more than would take him back to America. After thanking their adorers, who were not sparing of their most respectful demonstrations, Uncle Prudent, Phil Evans, and Frycollin embarked for Auckland. They said nothing of their adventures, and in two weeks landed in New Zealand.

At Auckland, a mail-boat took them on board as passengers, and after a splendid passage the survivors of the Albatross stepped ashore at San Francisco. They said nothing as to who they were or whence they had come, but as they had paid full price for their berths no American captain would trouble them further. At San Francisco they took the first train out on the Pacific Railway, and on the 27th of September, they arrived at Philadelphia. That is the compendious history of what had occurred since the escape of the fugitives. And that is why this very evening the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute took their seats amid a most extraordinary attendance.

Never before had either of them been so calm. To look at them it did not seem as though anything abnormal had happened since the memorable sitting of the 12th of June. Three months and a half had gone, and seemed to be counted as nothing. After the first round of cheers, which both received without showing the slightest emotion, Uncle Prudent took off his hat and spoke.

"Worthy citizens," said he, "the meeting is now open."

Tremendous applause. And properly so, for if it was not extraordinary that the meeting was open, it was ex-

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traordinary that it should be opened by Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans.

The president allowed the enthusiasm to subside in shouts and clappings; then he continued: "At our last meeting, gentlemen, the discussion was somewhat animated—(hear, hear)—between the partisans of the screw before and those of the screw behind for our balloon the Go-ahead. (Marks of surprise.) We have found a way to bring the beforists and the behindists in agreement. That way is as follows: we are going to use two screws, one at each end of the car!" (Silence and complete stupefaction.)

That was all.

Yes, all! Of the kidnapping of the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute not a word! Not a word of the Albatross nor of Robur! Not a word of the voyage! Not a word of the way in which the prisoners had escaped! Not a word of what had become of the aeronef, if it still flew through space, or if they were to be prepared for new reprisals on the members of the club!

Of course the balloonists were longing to ask Uncle Prudent and the secretary about all these things, but they looked so close and so serious that they thought it best to respect their attitude. When they thought fit to speak they would do so, and it would be an honor to hear. After all, there might be in all this some secret which would not yet be divulged.

And then Uncle Prudent, resuming his speech amid a silence up to then unknown in the meetings of the Weldon Institute, said, "Gentlemen, it now only remains for us to finish the aerostat Goahead. It is left to her to effect the conquest of the air! The meeting is at an end!"

CHAPTER XXII

THE GOAHEAD IS LAUNCHED

On the following 19th of April, seven months after the unexpected return of Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans, Philadelphia was in a state of unwonted excitement. There were neither elections nor meetings this time. The aerostat Goahead, built by the Weldon Institute, was to take possession of her natural element.

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The celebrated Harry W. Tinder, whose name we mentioned at the beginning of this story, had been engaged as aeronaut. He had no assistant, and the only passengers were to be the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute. Did they not merit such an honor? Did it not come to them appropriately to rise in person to protest against any apparatus that was heavier than air?

During the seven months, however, they had said nothing of their adventures; and even Frycollin had not uttered a whisper of Robur and his wonderful clipper. Probably Uncle Prudent and his friend desired that no question should arise as to the merits of the aeronef, or any other flying machine. Although the Goahead might not claim the first place among aerial locomotives, they would have nothing to say about the inventions of other aviators. They believed, and would always believe, that the true atmospheric vehicle was the aerostat, and that to it alone belonged the future.

Besides, he on whom they had been so terribly—and in their idea so justly—avenged, existed no longer. None of those who accompanied him had survived. The secret of the Albatross was buried in the depths of the Pacific!

That Robur had a retreat, an island in the middle of that vast ocean, where he could put into port, was only a hypothesis; and the colleagues reserved to themselves the right of making inquiries on the subject—later on.

The grand experiment which the Weldon Institute had been preparing for so long was at last to take place. The Goahead was the most perfect type of what had up to then been invented in aerostatic art—she was what an Inflexible or a Formidable is in ships of war.

She possessed all the qualities of a good aerostat. Her dimensions allowed of her rising to the greatest height a balloon could attain; her impermeability enabled her to remain for an indefinite time in the atmosphere; her solidity would defy any dilatation of gas or violence of wind or rain; her capacity gave her sufficient ascensional force to lift with all their accessories an electric engine that would communicate to her propellers a power superior to anything yet obtained. The Goahead was of elongated form, so as to facilitate her horizontal displacement. Her car was a platform somewhat like that of the balloon used by Krebs

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and Renard; and it carried all the necessary outfit, instruments, cables, grapnels, guide-ropes, etc., and the piles and accumulators for the mechanical power. The car had a screw in front, and a screw and rudder behind. But probably the work done by the machines would be very much less than that done by the machines of the Albatross.

The Goahead had been taken to the clearing in Fairmont Park, to the very spot where the aeronef had landed for a few hours.

Her ascensional power was due to the very lightest of gaseous bodies. Ordinary lighting gas possesses an elevating force of about 700 grammes for every cubic meter. But hydrogen possesses an ascensional force estimated at 1,100 grammes per cubic meter. Pure hydrogen prepared according to the method of the celebrated Henry Gifford filled the enormous balloon. And as the capacity of the Goahead was 40,000 cubic meters, the ascensional power of the gas she contained was 40,000 multiplied by 1,100, or 44,000 kilogrammes.

On this 29th of April everything was ready. Since eleven o'clock the enormous aerostat had been floating a few feet from the ground ready to rise in mid-air. It was splendid weather and seemed to have been made specially for the experiment, although if the breeze had been stronger the results might have been more conclusive. There had never been any doubt that a balloon could be guided in a calm atmosphere; but to guide it when the atmosphere is in motion is quite another thing; and it is under such circumstances that the experiment should be tried.

But there was no wind to-day, nor any sign of any. Strange to say, North America on that day omitted to send on to Europe one of those first-class storms which it seems to have in such inexhaustible numbers. A better day could not have been chosen for an aeronautic experiment.

The crowd was immense in Fairmont Park; trains had poured into the Pennsylvania capital sightseers from the neighboring states; industrial and commercial life came to a standstill that the people might troop to the show—masters, workmen, women, old men, children, members of Congress, soldiers, magistrates, reporters, white natives and

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black natives, all were there. We need not stop to describe the excitement, the unaccountable movements, the sudden pushings, which made the mass heave and swell. Nor need we recount the number of cheers which rose from all sides like fireworks when Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans appeared on the platform and hoisted the American colors. Need we say that the majority of the crowd had come from afar not so much to see the Goahead as to gaze on these extraordinary men?

Why two and not three? Why not Frycollin? Because Frycollin thought his campaign in the Albatross sufficient for his fame. He had declined the honor of accompanying his master, and he took no part in the frenzied acclamations that greeted the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute.

Of the members of the illustrious assembly not one was absent from the reserved places within the ropes. There were Truck Milnor, Bat T. Fynn, and William T. Forbes with his two daughters on his arm. All had come to affirm by their presence that nothing could separate them from the partisans of "lighter than air."

About twenty minutes past eleven a gun announced the end of the final preparations. The Goahead only waited the signal to start. At twenty-five minutes past eleven the second gun was fired.

The Goahead was about one hundred and fifty feet above the clearing, and was held by a rope. In this way the platform commanded the excited crowd. Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans stood upright and placed their left hands on their hearts, to signify how deeply they were touched by their reception. Then they extended their right hands towards the zenith, to signify that the greatest of known balloons was about to take possession of the supra-terrestrial domain.

A hundred thousand hands were placed in answer on a hundred thousand hearts, and a hundred thousand other hands were lifted to the sky.

The third gun was fired at half-past eleven. "Let go!" shouted Uncle Prudent; and the Goahead rose "majestically"—an adverb consecrated by custom to all aerostatic ascents.

It really was a superb spectacle. It seemed as if a vessel

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were just launched from the stocks. And was she not a vessel launched into the aerial sea? The Goahead went up in a perfectly vertical line—a proof of the calmness of the atmosphere—and stopped at an altitude of eight hundred feet.

Then she began her horizontal maneuvering. With her screws going she moved to the east at a speed of twelve yards a second. That is the speed of the whale—not an inappropriate comparison, for the balloon was somewhat of the shape of the giant of the northern seas.

A salvo of cheers mounted towards the skillful aeronauts.

Then, under the influence of her rudder, the Goahead went through all the evolutions that her steersman could give her. She turned in a small circle; she moved forwards and backwards in a way to convince the most refractory disbeliever in the guiding of balloons. And if there had been any disbeliever there he would have been simply annihilated.

But why was there no wind to assist at this magnificent experiment? It was regrettable. Doubtless the spectators would have seen the Goahead unhesitatingly execute all the movements of a sailing-vessel in beating to windward, or of a steamer driving in the wind's eye.

At this moment the aerostat rose a few hundred yards.

The maneuver was understood below. Uncle Prudent and his companions were going in search of a breeze in the higher zones, so as to complete the experiment. The system of cellular balloons—analogous to the swimming bladder in fishes—into which could be introduced a certain amount of air by pumping, had provided for this vertical motion. Without throwing out ballast or losing gas the aeronaut was able to rise or sink at his will. Of course there was a valve in the upper hemisphere which would permit of a rapid descent if found necessary. All these contrivances are well known, but they were here fitted in perfection.

The Goahead then rose vertically. Her enormous dimensions gradually grew smaller to the eye, and the necks of the crowd were almost cricked as they gazed into the air. Gradually the whale became a porpoise, and the porpoise became a gudgeon. The ascensional movement did not cease until the Goahead had reached a height of fourteen thousand

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feet. But the air was so free from mist that she remained clearly visible.

However, she remained over the clearing as if she were a fixture. An immense bell had imprisoned the atmosphere and deprived it of movement; not a breath of wind was there, high or low. The aerostat maneuvered without encountering any resistance, seeming very small owing to the distance, much as if she were being looked at through the wrong end of a telescape.

Suddenly there was a shout among the crowd, a shout followed by a hundred thousand more. All hands were stretched towards a point on the horizon. That point was the northwest.

There in the deep azure appeared a moving body, which was approaching and growing larger. Was it a bird beating with its wings the higher zones of space? Was it an aerolite shooting obliquely through the atmosphere? In any case, its speed was terrific, and it would soon be above the crowd.

A suspicion communicated itself electrically to the brains of all on the clearing.

But it seemed as though the Goahead had sighted this strange object. Assuredly it seemed as though she feared some danger, for her speed was increased, and she was going east as fast as she could.

Yes, the crowd saw what it meant! A name uttered by one of the members of the Weldon Institute was repeated by a hundred thousand mouths:

"The Albatross! the Albatross!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE GRAND COLLAPSE

It was indeed the Albatross! It was indeed Robur who had reappeared in the heights of the sky! It was he who like a huge bird of prey was going to strike the Goahead.

And yet, nine months before, the aeronef, shattered by the explosion, her screws broken, her deck smashed in two, had been apparently annihilated.

Without the prodigious coolness of the engineer, who reversed the gyratory motion of the fore propeller and con-

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verted it into a suspensory screw, the men of the Albatross would all have been asphyxiated by the fall. But if they had escaped asphyxia, how had they escaped being drowned in the Pacific?

The remains of the deck, the blades of the propellers, the compartments of the cabins, all formed a sort of raft. When a wounded bird falls on the waves its wings keep it afloat. For several hours Robur and his men remained unhelped, at first on the wreck, and afterwards in the india-rubber boat that had fallen uninjured. A few hours after sunrise they were sighted by a passing ship, and a boat was lowered to their rescue.

Robur and his companions were saved, and so was much of what remained of the aeronef. The engineer said that his ship had perished in a collision, and no further questions were asked him.

The ship was an English three-master, the *Two Friends*, bound to Melbourne, where she arrived a few days afterwards.

Robur was in Australia, but a long way from X Island, to which he desired to return as soon as possible.

In the ruins of the aftermost cabin he had found a considerable sum of money, quite enough to provide for himself and companions without applying to anyone for help. A short time after he arrived in Melbourne he became the owner of a small brigantine of about a hundred tons, and in her he sailed for X Island.

There he had but one idea—to be avenged. But to secure his vengeance he would have to make another Albatross. This after all was an easy task for him who made the first. He used up what he could of the old material; the propellers and engines he had brought back in the brigantine. The mechanism was fitted with new piles and new accumulators, and, in short, in less than eight months the work was finished and a new Albatross, identical with the one destroyed by the explosion, was ready to take flight. And he had the same crew.

The Albatross left X Island in the first week of April. During this aerial passage Robur did not want to be seen from the earth, and he came along almost always above the clouds. When he arrived over North America he descended in a desolate spot in the Far West. There the engineer,

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keeping a profound incognito, learnt with considerable pleasure that the Weldon Institute was about to begin its experiments, and that the Goahead, with Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans, was going to start from Philadelphia on the 29th of April.

Here was a chance for Robur and his crew to gratify their longing for revenge! Here was a chance of inflicting on their foes a terrible vengeance, which in the Goahead they could not escape! A public vengeance, which would at the same time prove the superiority of the aeronef to all aerostats and contrivances of that nature!

And that is why, on this very day, like a vulture from the clouds, the aeronef appeared over Fairmont Park.

Yes! It was the Albatross, easily recognized by all those who had never before seen her.

The Goahead was in full flight; but it soon appeared that she could not escape horizontally, and so she sought her safety in a vertical direction, not dropping to the ground, for the aeronef would have cut her off, but rising to a zone where she could not perhaps be reached. This was very daring, and at the same time very logical.

But the Albatross began to rise after her. Although she was smaller than the Goahead, it was a case of the sword-fish and the whale.

This could easily be seen from below, and with what anxiety! In a few moments the aerostat had attained a height of sixteen thousand feet.

The Albatross followed her as she rose. She flew round her flanks, and maneuvered round her in a circle with a constantly diminishing radius. She could have annihilated her at a stroke, and Uncle Prudent and his companions would have been dashed to atoms in a frightful fall.

The people, mute with horror, gazed breathlessly; they were seized with that sort of fear which presses on the chest and grips the legs when we see anyone fall from a height. An aerial combat was beginning in which there were none of the chances of safety as in a sea-fight. It was the first of its kind, but it would not be the last, for progress is one of the laws of this world. And if the Goahead was flying the American colors, did not the Albatross display the stars and golden sun of Robur the Conqueror?

The Goahead tried to distance her enemy by rising still

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higher. She threw away the ballast she had in reserve; she made a new leap of three thousand feet; she was now but a dot in space. The Albatross, which followed her round and round at top speed, was now invisible.

Suddenly a shout of terror rose from the crowd. The Goahead increased rapidly in size, and the aeronef appeared dropping with her. This time it was a fall. The gas had dilated in the higher zones of the atmosphere and had burst the balloon, which, half inflated still, was falling rapidly.

But the aeronef, slowing her suspensory screws, came down just as fast. She ran alongside the Goahead when she was not more than four thousand feet from the ground.

Would Robur destroy her?

No; he was going to save her crew!

And so cleverly did he handle his vessel that the aeronaut jumped on board.

Would Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans refuse to be saved by him? They were quite capable of doing so. But the crew threw themselves on them and dragged them by force from the Goahead to the Albatross.

Then the aeronef glided off and remained stationary, while the balloon, quite empty of gas, fell on the trees of the clearing and hung there like a gigantic rag.

An appalling silence reigned on the ground. It seemed as though life were suspended in each of the crowd; and many eyes had been closed so as not to behold the final catastrophe.

Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans had again become the prisoners of the redoubtable Robur. Now he had recaptured them, would he carry them off into space, where it was impossible to follow him?

It seemed so.

However, instead of mounting into the sky the Albatross continued falling. Was she coming down to the ground? It looked like it, and the crowd divided so as to leave a space for her in the center of the clearing.

The excitement was at its maximum. The Albatross stopped six feet from the ground. Then, amid profound silence, the engineer's voice was heard.

"Citizens of the United States," he said, "the president and secretary of the Weldon Institute are again in my power. In keeping them I am only within my right. But

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from the passion kindled in them by the success of the Albatross I see that their minds are not prepared for that important revolution which the conquest of the air will one day bring. Uncle Prudent and Phil Evans, you are free!"

The president, the secretary, and the aeronaut had only to jump down.

Then Robur continued:

"Citizens of the United States, my experiment is finished; but my advice to those present is to be premature in nothing, not even in progress. It is evolution and not revolution that we should seek. In a word, we must not be before our time. I have come too soon to-day to withstand such contradictory and divided interests as yours. Nations are not yet fit for union.

"I go, then; and I take my secret with me. But it will not be lost to humanity. It will belong to you the day you are educated enough to profit by it and wise enough not to abuse it. Citizens of the United States! Good-by!"

And the Albatross, beating the air with her seventy-four screws, and driven by her propellers, shot off towards the east amid a tempest of cheers.

The two colleagues, profoundly humiliated, as through them was the whole Weldon Institute, did the only thing they could. They went home.

And the crowd by a sudden change of front greeted them with particularly keen sarcasms, and, at their expense, are sarcastic still.

• • • • •

And now, who is this Robur? Shall we ever know?

We know to-day. Robur is the science of the future. Perhaps the science of to-morrow! Certainly the science that will come!

Does the Albatross still cruise in the atmosphere in the realm that none can take from her? There is no reason to doubt it. Will Robur, the Conqueror, appear one day as he said? Yes! He will come to declare the secret of

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his invention, which will greatly change the social and political conditions of the world.

As for the future of aerial locomotion, it belongs to the aeronef and not the aerostat.

It is to the Albatross that the conquest of the air will assuredly fall.

THE END

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The Master of the World

V. XIV Verne

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The Master of the World

CHAPTER I

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE MOUNTAINS

IF I speak of myself in this story, it is because I have been deeply involved in its startling events, events doubtless among the most extraordinary which this twentieth century will witness. Sometimes I even ask myself if all this has really happened, if its pictures dwell in truth in my memory, and not merely in my imagination. In my position as head inspector in the federal police department at Washington, urged on moreover by the desire, which has always been very strong in me, to investigate and understand everything which is mysterious, I naturally became much interested in these remarkable occurrences. And as I have been employed by the government in various important affairs and secret missions since I was a mere lad, it also happened very naturally that the head of my department placed in my charge this astonishing investigation, wherein I found myself wrestling with so many impenetrable mysteries.

In the remarkable passages of the recital, it is important that you should believe my word. For some of the facts I can bring no other testimony than my own. If you do not wish to believe me, so be it. I can scarce believe it all myself.

The strange occurrences began in the western part of our great American State of North Carolina. There, deep amid the Blueridge Mountains rises the crest called the Great Eyrie. Its huge rounded form is distinctly seen from the little town of Morganton on the Catawba River, and still more clearly as one approaches the mountains by way of the village of Pleasant Garden.

Why the name of Great Eyrie was originally given this mountain by the people of the surrounding region, I am not quite sure. It rises rocky and grim and inaccessible, and under certain atmospheric conditions has a peculiarly blue and distant effect. But the idea one would naturally get

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from the name is of a refuge for birds of prey, eagles, condors, vultures; the home of vast numbers of the feathered tribes, wheeling and screaming above peaks beyond the reach of man. Now, the Great Eyrie did not seem particularly attractive to birds; on the contrary, the people of the neighborhood began to remark that on some days when birds approached its summit they mounted still further, circled high above the crest, and then flew swiftly away, troubling the air with harsh cries.

Why then the name Great Eyrie? Perhaps the mount might better have been called a crater, for in the center of those steep and rounded walls there might well be a huge, deep basin. Perhaps there might even lie within their circuit a mountain lake, such as exists in other parts of the Appalachian mountain system, a lagoon fed by the rain and the winter snows.

In brief was not this the site of an ancient volcano, one which had slept through ages, but whose inner fires might yet reawake? Might not the Great Eyrie reproduce in its neighborhood the violence of Mount Krakatoa or the terrible disaster of Mont Pelée? If there were indeed a central lake, was there not danger that its waters, penetrating the strata beneath, would be turned to steam by the volcanic fires and tear their way forth in a tremendous explosion, deluging the fair plains of Carolina with an eruption such as that of 1902 in Martinique?

Indeed, with regard to this last possibility there had been certain symptoms recently observed which might well be due to volcanic action. Smoke had floated above the mountain and once the country folk passing near had heard subterranean noises, unexplainable rumblings. A glow in the sky had crowned the height at night.

When the wind blew the smoky cloud eastward toward Pleasant Garden, a few cinders and ashes drifted down from it. And finally one stormy night pale flames, reflected from the clouds above the summit, cast upon the district below a sinister, warning light.

In presence of these strange phenomena, it is not astonishing that the people of the surrounding district became seriously disquieted. And to the disquiet was joined an imperious need of knowing the true condition of the mountain. The Carolina newspapers had flaring headlines, " The

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Mystery of Great Eyrie!" They asked if it was not dangerous to dwell in such a region. Their articles aroused curiosity and fear—curiosity among those who being in no danger themselves were interested in the disturbance merely as a strange phenomenon of nature, fear in those who were likely to be the victims if a catastrophe actually occurred. Those more immediately threatened were the citizens of Morganton, and even more the good folk of Pleasant Garden and the hamlets and farms yet closer to the mountain.

Assuredly it was regrettable that mountain climbers had not previously attempted to ascend to the summit of the Great Eyrie. The cliffs of rock which surrounded it had never been scaled. Perhaps they might offer no path by which even the most daring climber could penetrate to the interior. Yet, if a volcanic eruption menaced all the western region of the Carolinas, then a complete examination of the mountain was become absolutely necessary.

Now before the actual ascent of the crater, with its many serious difficulties, was attempted, there was one way which offered an opportunity of reconnoitering the interior, without clambering up the precipices. In the first days of September of that memorable year, a well-known aeronaut named Wilker came to Morganton with his balloon. By waiting for a breeze from the east, he could easily rise in his balloon and drift over the Great Eyrie. There from a safe height above he could search with a powerful glass into its deeps. Thus he would know if the mouth of a volcano really opened amid the mighty rocks. This was the principal question. If this were settled, it would be known if the surrounding country must fear an eruption at some period more or less distant.

The ascension was begun according to the programme suggested. The wind was fair and steady; the sky clear; the morning clouds were disappearing under the vigorous rays of the sun. If the interior of the Great Eyrie was not filled with smoke, the aeronaut would be able to search with his glass its entire extent. If the vapors were rising, he, no doubt, could detect their source.

The balloon rose at once to a height of fifteen hundred feet, and there rested almost motionless for a quarter of an hour. Evidently the east wind, which was brisk upon the surface of the earth, did not make itself felt at that height.

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Then, unlucky chance, the balloon was caught in an adverse current, and began to drift toward the east. Its distance from the mountain chain rapidly increased. Despite all the efforts of the aeronaut, the citizens of Morganton saw the balloon disappear on the wrong horizon. Later, they learned that it had landed in the neighborhood of Raleigh, the capital of North Carolina.

This attempt having failed, it was agreed that it should be tried again under better conditions. Indeed, fresh rumblings were heard from the mountain, accompanied by heavy clouds and wavering glimmerings of light at night. Folk began to realize that the Great Eyrie was a serious and perhaps imminent source of danger. Yes, the entire country lay under the threat of some seismic or volcanic disaster.

During the first days of April of that year, these more or less vague apprehensions turned to actual panic. The newspapers gave prompt echo to the public terror. The entire district between the mountains and Morganton was sure that an eruption was at hand.

The night of the fourth of April, the good folk of Pleasant Garden were awakened by a sudden uproar. They thought that the mountains were falling upon them. They rushed from their houses, ready for instant flight, fearing to see open before them some immense abyss, engulfing the farms and villages for miles around.

The night was very dark. A weight of heavy clouds pressed down upon the plain. Even had it been day the crest of the mountains would have been invisible.

In the midst of this impenetrable obscurity, there was no response to the cries which arose from every side. Frightened groups of men, women, and children groped their way along the black roads in wild confusion. From every quarter came the screaming voices: "It is an earthquake!" "It is an eruption!" "Whence comes it?" "From the Great Eyrie!"

Into Morganton sped the news that stones, lava, ashes, were raining down upon the country.

Shrewd citizens of the town, however, observed that if there were an eruption the noise would have continued and increased, the flames would have appeared above the crater; or at least their lurid reflections would have penetrated the clouds. Now, even these reflections were no longer seen.

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If there had been an earthquake, the terrified people saw that at least their houses had not crumbled beneath the shock. It was possible that the uproar had been caused by an avalanche, the fall of some mighty rock from the summit of the mountains.

An hour passed without other incident. A wind from the west sweeping over the long chain of the Blueridge, set the pines and hemlocks wailing on the higher slopes. There seemed no new cause for panic; and folk began to return to their houses. All, however, awaited impatiently the return of day.

Then suddenly, toward three o'clock in the morning, another alarm! Flames leaped up above the rocky wall of the Great Eyrie. Reflected from the clouds, they illuminated the atmosphere for a great distance. A crackling, as if of many burning trees, was heard.

Had a fire spontaneously broken out? And to what cause was it due? Lightning could not have started the conflagration; for no thunder had been heard. True, there was plenty of material for fire; at this height the chain of the Blueridge is well wooded. But these flames were too sudden for any ordinary cause.

"An eruption!" "An eruption!"

The cry resounded from all sides. An eruption! The Great Eyrie was then indeed the crater of a volcano buried in the bowels of the mountains. And after so many years, so many ages even, had it reawakened? Added to the flames, was a rain of stones and ashes about to follow? Were the lavas going to pour down torrents of molten fire, destroying everything in their passage, annihilating the towns, the villages, the farms, all this beautiful world of meadows, fields and forests, even as far as Pleasant Garden and Morganton?

This time the panic was overwhelming; nothing could stop it. Women carrying their infants, crazed with terror, rushed along the eastward roads. Men, deserting their homes, made hurried bundles of their most precious belongings and set free their livestock, cows, sheep, pigs, which fled in all directions. What disorder resulted from this agglomeration, human and animal, under darkest night, amid forests, threatened by the fires of the volcano, along the border of marshes whose waters might be upheaved and

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overflow! With the earth itself threatening to disappear from under the feet of the fugitives! Would they be in time to save themselves, if a cascade of glowing lava came rolling down the slope of the mountain across their route?

Nevertheless, some of the chief and shrewder farm owners were not swept away in this mad flight, which they did their best to restrain. Venturing within a mile of the mountain, they saw that the glare of the flames was decreasing. In truth it hardly seemed that the region was immediately menaced by any further upheaval. No stones were being hurled into space; no torrent of lava was visible upon the slopes; no rumblings rose from the ground. There was no further manifestation of any seismic disturbance capable of overwhelming the land.

At length, the flight of the fugitives ceased at a distance where they seemed secure from all danger. Then a few ventured back toward the mountain. Some farms were reoccupied before the break of day.

By morning the crests of the Great Eyrie showed scarcely the least remnant of its cloud of smoke. The fires were certainly at an end; and if it were impossible to determine their cause, one might at least hope that they would not break out again.

It appeared possible that the Great Eyrie had not really been the theater of volcanic phenomena at all. There was no further evidence that the neighborhood was at the mercy either of eruptions or of earthquakes.

Yet once more about five o'clock, from beneath the ridge of the mountain, where the shadows of night still lingered, a strange noise swept across the air, a sort of whirring, accompanied by the beating of mighty wings. And had it been a clear day, perhaps the farmers would have seen the passage of a mighty bird of prey, some monster of the skies, which having risen from the Great Eyrie sped away toward the east.

CHAPTER II

I REACH MORGANTON

THE twenty-seventh of April, having left Washington the night before, I arrived at Raleigh, the capital of the State of North Carolina.

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Two days before, the head of the federal police had called me to his room. He was awaiting me with some impatience. "John Strock," said he, "are you still the man who on so many occasions has proven to me both his devotion and his ability?"

"Mr. Ward," I answered, with a bow, "I cannot promise success or even ability, but as to devotion, I assure you, it is yours."

"I do not doubt it," responded the chief. "And I will ask you instead this more exact question: Are you as fond of riddles as ever? As eager to penetrate into mysteries, as I have known you before?"

"I am, Mr. Ward."

"Good, Strock; then listen."

Mr. Ward, a man of about fifty years, of great power and intellect, was fully master of the important position he filled. He had several times entrusted to me difficult missions which I had accomplished successfully, and which had won me his confidence. For several months past, however, he had found no occasion for my services. Therefore I awaited with impatience what he had to say. I did not doubt that his questioning implied a serious and important task for me.

"Doubtless you know," said he, "what has happened down in the Blueridge Mountains near Morganton."

"Surely, Mr. Ward, the phenomena reported from there have been singular enough to arouse anyone's curiosity."

"They are singular, even remarkable, Strock. No doubt about that. But there is also reason to ask, if these phenomena about the Great Eyrie are not a source of continued danger to the people there, if they are not forerunners of some disaster as terrible as it is mysterious."

"It is to be feared, sir."

"So we must know, Strock, what is inside of that mountain. If we are helpless in the face of some great force of nature, people must be warned in time of the danger which threatens them."

"It is clearly the duty of the authorities, Mr. Ward," responded I, "to learn what is going on within there."

"True, Strock; but that presents great difficulties. Everyone reports that it is impossible to scale the precipices

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of the Great Eyrie and reach its interior. But has anyone ever attempted it with scientific appliances and under the best conditions? I doubt it, and believe a resolute attempt may bring success."

"Nothing is impossible, Mr. Ward; what we face here is merely a question of expense."

"We must not regard expense when we are seeking to reassure an entire population, or to preserve it from a catastrophe. There is another suggestion I would make to you. Perhaps this Great Eyrie is not so inaccessible as is supposed. Perhaps a band of malefactors have secreted themselves there, gaining access by ways known only to themselves."

"What! You suspect that robbers——"

"Perhaps I am wrong, Strock; and these strange sights and sounds have all had natural causes. Well, that is what we have to settle, and as quickly as possible."

"I have one question to ask."

"Go ahead, Strock."

"When the Great Eyrie has been visited, when we know the source of these phenomena, if there really is a crater there and an eruption is imminent, can we avert it?"

"No, Strock; but we can estimate the extent of the danger. If some volcano in the Alleghanies threatens North Carolina with a disaster similar to that of Martinique, buried beneath the outpourings of Mont Pelée, then these people must leave their homes——"

"I hope, sir, there is no such widespread danger."

"I think not, Strock; it seems to me highly improbable that an active volcano exists in the Blueridge mountain chain. Our Appalachian mountain system is nowhere volcanic in its origin. But all these events cannot be without basis. In short, Strock, we have decided to make a strict inquiry into the phenomena of the Great Eyrie, to gather all the testimony, to question the people of the towns and farms. To do this, I have made choice of an agent in whom we have full confidence; and this agent is you, Strock."

"Good! I am ready, Mr. Ward," cried I, "and be sure that I shall neglect nothing to bring you full information."

"I know it, Strock, and I will add that I regard you as specially fitted for the work. You will have a splendid op-

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portunity to exercise, and I hope to satisfy, your favorite passion of curiosity."

"As you say, sir."

"You will be free to act according to circumstances. As to expenses, if there seems reason to organize an ascension party, which will be costly, you have *carte blanche*."

"I will act as seems best, Mr. Ward."

"Let me caution you to act with all possible discretion. The people in the vicinity are already over-excited. It will be well to move secretly. Do not mention the suspicions I have suggested to you. And above all, avoid arousing any fresh panic."

"It is understood."

"You will be accredited to the Mayor of Morganton, who will assist you. Once more, be prudent, Strock, and acquaint no one with your mission, unless it is absolutely necessary. You have often given proofs of your intelligence and address; and this time I feel assured you will succeed."

I asked him only "When shall I start?"

"To-morrow."

"To-morrow, I shall leave Washington; and the day after, I shall be at Morganton."

How little suspicion had I of what the future had in store for me!

I returned immediately to my house where I made my preparations for departure; and the next evening found me in Raleigh. There I passed the night, and in the course of the next afternoon arrived at the railroad station of Morganton.

Morganton is but a small town, built upon strata of the jurassic period, particularly rich in coal. Its mines give it some prosperity. It also has numerous unpleasant mineral waters, so that the season there attracts many visitors. Around Morganton is a rich farming country, with broad fields of grain. It lies in the midst of swamps, covered with mosses and reeds. Evergreen forests rise high up the mountain slopes. All that the region lacks is the wells of natural gas, that invaluable natural source of power, light, and warmth, so abundant in most of the Alleghany valleys. Villages and farms are numerous up to the very borders of the mountain forests.

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Thus there were many thousands of people threatened, if the Great Eyrie proved indeed a volcano, if the convulsions of nature extended to Pleasant Garden and to Morganton.

The mayor of Morganton, Mr. Elias Smith, was a tall man, vigorous and enterprising, forty years old or more, and of a health to defy all the doctors of the two Americas. He was a great hunter of bears and panthers, beasts which may still be found in the wild gorges and mighty forests of the Alleghanies.

Mr. Smith was himself a rich land-owner, possessing several farms in the neighborhood. Even his most distant tenants received frequent visits from him. Indeed, whenever his official duties did not keep him in his so-called home at Morganton, he was exploring the surrounding country, irresistibly drawn by the instincts of the hunter.

I went at once to the house of Mr. Smith. He was expecting me, having been warned by telegram. He received me very frankly, without any formality, his pipe in his mouth, a glass of brandy on the table. A second glass was brought in by a servant, and I had to drink to my host before beginning our interview.

"Mr. Ward sent you," said he to me in a jovial tone. "Good; let us drink to Mr. Ward's health."

I clinked glasses with him, and drank in honor of the chief of police.

"And now," demanded Elias Smith, "what is worrying him?"

At this I made known to the mayor of Morganton the cause and the purpose of my mission in North Carolina. I assured him that my chief had given me full power, and would render me every assistance, financial and otherwise, to solve the riddle and relieve the neighborhood of its anxiety relative to the Great Eyrie.

Elias Smith listened to me without uttering a word, but not without several times refilling his glass and mine. While he puffed steadily at his pipe, the close attention which he gave me was beyond question. I saw his cheeks flush at times, and his eyes gleam under their bushy brows. Evidently the chief magistrate of Morganton was uneasy about Great Eyrie, and would be as eager as I to discover the cause of these phenomena.

When I had finished my communication, Elias Smith

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gazed at me for some moments in silence. Then he said, softly, "So at Washington they wish to know what the Great Eyrie hides within its circuit?"

"Yes, Mr. Smith."

"And you, also?"

"I do."

"So do I, Mr. Strock."

He and I were as one in our curiosity.

"You will understand," added he, knocking the cinders from his pipe, "that as a land-owner, I am much interested in these stories of the Great Eyrie, and as mayor, I wish to protect my constituents."

"A double reason," I commented, "to stimulate you to discover the cause of these extraordinary occurrences! Without doubt, my dear Mr. Smith, they have appeared to you as inexplicable and as threatening as to your people."

"Inexplicable, certainly, Mr. Strock. For on my part, I do not believe it possible that the Great Eyrie can be a volcano; the Alleghanies are nowhere of volcanic origin. I, myself, in our immediate district, have never found any geological traces of scoria, or lava, or any eruptive rock whatever. I do not think, therefore, that Morganton can possibly be threatened from such a source."

"You really think not, Mr. Smith?"

"Certainly."

"But these tremblings of the earth that have been felt in the neighborhood!"

"Yes these tremblings! These tremblings!" repeated Mr. Smith, shaking his head; "but in the first place, is it certain that there have been tremblings? At the moment when the flames showed most sharply, I was on my farm of Wildon, less than a mile from the Great Eyrie. There was certainly a tumult in the air, but I felt no quivering of the earth."

"But in the reports sent to Mr. Ward——"

"Reports made under the impulse of the panic," interrupted the mayor of Morganton. "I said nothing of any earth tremors in mine."

"But as to the flames which rose clearly above the crest?"

"Yes, as to those, Mr. Strock, that is different. I saw them; saw them with my own eyes, and the clouds certainly

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reflected them for miles around. Moreover noises certainly came from the crater of the Great Eyrie, hissings, as if a great boiler were letting off steam."

"You have reliable testimony of this?"

"Yes, the evidence of my own ears."

"And in the midst of this noise, Mr. Smith, did you believe that you heard that most remarkable of all the phenomena, a sound like the flapping of great wings?"

"I thought so, Mr. Strock; but what mighty bird could this be, which sped away after the flames had died down, and what wings could ever make such tremendous sounds. I therefore seriously question, if this must not have been a deception of my imagination. The Great Eyrie a refuge for unknown monsters of the sky! Would they not have been seen long since, soaring above their immense nest of stone? In short, there is in all this a mystery which has not yet been solved."

"But we will solve it, Mr. Smith, if you will give me your aid."

"Surely, Mr. Strock; to-morrow we will start our campaign."

"To-morrow." And on that word the mayor and I separated. I went to a hotel, and established myself for a stay which might be indefinitely prolonged. Then having dined, and written to Mr. Ward, I saw Mr. Smith again in the afternoon, and arranged to leave Morganton with him at daybreak.

Our first purpose was to undertake the ascent of the mountain, with the aid of two experienced guides. These men had ascended Mt. Mitchell and others of the highest peaks of the Blueridge. They had never, however, attempted the Great Eyrie, knowing that its walls of inaccessible cliffs defended it on every side. Moreover, before the recent startling occurrences the Great Eyrie had not particularly attracted the attention of tourists. Mr. Smith knew the two guides personally as men daring, skillful and trustworthy. They would stop at no obstacle; and we were resolved to follow them through everything.

Moreover Mr. Smith remarked at the last that perhaps it was no longer as difficult as formerly to penetrate within the Great Eyrie.

"And why?" asked I.

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"Because a huge block has recently broken away from the mountain side and perhaps it has left a practicable path or entrance."

"That would be a fortunate chance, Mr. Smith."

"We shall know all about it, Mr. Strock, no later than to-morrow."

"Till to-morrow, then."

CHAPTER III
THE GREAT EYRIE

THE next day at dawn, Elias Smith and I left Morganton by a road which, winding along the left bank of the Catawba River, led to the village of Pleasant Garden. The guides accompanied us, Harry Horn, a man of thirty, and James Bruck, aged twenty-five. They were both natives of the region, and in constant demand among the tourists who climbed the peaks of the Blueridge and Cumberland Mountains.

A light wagon with two good horses was provided to carry us to the foot of the range. It contained provisions for two or three days, beyond which our trip surely would not be protracted. Mr. Smith had shown himself a generous provider both in meats and in liquors. As to water, the mountain springs would furnish it in abundance, increased by the heavy rains, frequent in that region during springtime.

It is needless to add that the Mayor of Morganton in his rôle of hunter, had brought along his gun and his dog Nisko, who gamboled joyously about the wagon. Nisko, however, was to remain behind at the farm at Wildon, when we attempted our ascent. He could not possibly follow us up the Great Eyrie with its cliffs to scale and its crevasses to cross.

The day was beautiful, the fresh air in that climate is still cool of an April morning. A few fleecy clouds sped rapidly overhead, driven by a light breeze which swept across the long plains, from the distant Atlantic. The sun, peeping forth at intervals, illumined all the fresh young verdure of the countryside.

An entire world animated the woods through which we

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passed. From before our equipage fled squirrels, field-mice, parroquets of brilliant colors and deafening loquacity. Opossums passed in hurried leaps, bearing their young in their pouches. Myriads of birds were scattered amid the foliage of banyans, palms, and masses of rhododendrons, so luxuriant that their thickets were impenetrable.

We arrived that evening at Pleasant Garden, where we were comfortably located for the night with the mayor of the town, a particular friend of Mr. Smith. Pleasant Garden proved little more than a village; but its mayor gave us a warm and generous reception, and we supped pleasantly in his charming home, which stood beneath the shades of some giant beech-trees.

Naturally the conversation turned upon our attempt to explore the interior of the Great Eyrie. "You are right," said our host, "until we all know what is hidden within there, our people will remain uneasy."

"Has nothing new occurred," I asked, "since the last appearance of flames above the Great Eyrie?"

"Nothing, Mr. Strock. From Pleasant Garden we can see the entire crest of the mountain. Not a suspicious noise has come down to us. Not a spark has risen. If a legion of devils is in hiding there, they must have finished their infernal cookery, and soared away to some other haunt."

"Devils!" cried Mr. Smith. "Well, I hope they have not decamped without leaving some traces of their occupation, some parings of hoofs or horns or tails. We shall find them out."

On the morrow, the twenty-ninth of April, we started again at dawn. By the end of this second day, we expected to reach the farm of Wildon at the foot of the mountain. The country was much the same as before, except that our road led more steeply upward. Woods and marshes alternated, though the latter grew sparser, being drained by the sun as we approached the higher levels. The country was also less populous. There were only a few little hamlets, almost lost beneath the beech trees, a few lonely farms, abundantly watered by the many streams that rushed downward toward the Catawba River.

The smaller birds and beasts grew yet more numerous. "I am much tempted to take my gun," said Mr. Smith,

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"and to go off with Nisko. This will be the first time that I have passed here without trying my luck with the partridges and hares. The good beasts will not recognize me. But not only have we plenty of provisions, but we have a bigger chase on hand to-day. The chase of a mystery."

"And let us hope," added I, "we do not come back disappointed hunters."

In the afternoon the whole chain of the Blueridge stretched before us at a distance of only six miles. The mountain crests were sharply outlined against the clear sky. Well wooded at the base, they grew more bare and showed only stunted evergreens toward the summit. There the scraggly trees, grotesquely twisted, gave to the rocky heights a bleak and bizarre appearance. Here and there the ridge rose in sharp peaks. On our right the Black Dome, nearly seven thousand feet high, reared its gigantic head, sparkling at times above the clouds.

"Have you ever climbed that dome, Mr. Smith?" I asked.

"No," answered he, "but I am told that it is a very difficult ascent. A few mountaineers have climbed it; but they report that it has no outlook commanding the crater of the Great Eyrie."

"That is so," said the guide, Harry Horn. "I have tried it myself."

"Perhaps," suggested I, "the weather was unfavorable."

"On the contrary, Mr. Strock, it was unusually clear. But the wall of the Great Eyrie on that side rose so high, it completely hid the interior."

"Forward," cried Mr. Smith. "I shall not be sorry to set foot where no person has ever stepped, or even looked, before."

Certainly on this day the Great Eyrie looked tranquil enough. As we gazed upon it, there rose from its heights neither smoke nor flame.

Toward five o'clock our expedition halted at the Wildon farm, where the tenants warmly welcomed their landlord. The farmer assured us that nothing notable had happened about the Great Eyrie for some time. We supped at a common table with all the people of the farm; and our sleep that night was sound and wholly untroubled by premonitions of the future.

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On the morrow, before break of day, we set out for the ascent of the mountain. The height of the Great Eyrie scarce exceeds five thousand feet. A modest altitude, often surpassed in this section of the Alleghanies. As we were already more than three thousand feet above sea level, the fatigue of the ascent could not be great. A few hours should suffice to bring us to the crest of the crater. Of course, difficulties might present themselves, precipices to scale, clefts and breaks in the ridge might necessitate painful and even dangerous detours. This was the unknown, the spur to our attempt. As I said, our guides knew no more than we upon this point. What made me anxious, was, of course, the common report that the Great Eyrie was wholly inaccessible. But this remained unproven. And then there was the new chance that a fallen block had left a breach in the rocky wall.

"At last," said Mr. Smith to me, after lighting the first pipe of the twenty or more which he smoked each day, "we are well started. As to whether the ascent will take more or less time——"

"In any case, Mr. Smith," interrupted I, "you and I are fully resolved to pursue our quest to the end."

"Fully resolved, Mr. Strock."

"My chief has charged me to snatch the secret from this demon of the Great Eyrie."

"We will snatch it from him, willing or unwilling," vowed Mr. Smith, calling Heaven to witness. "Even if we have to search the very bowels of the mountain."

"As it may happen, then," said I, "that our excursion will be prolonged beyond to-day, it will be well to look to our provisions."

"Be easy, Mr. Strock; our guides have food for two days in their knapsacks, besides what we carry ourselves. Moreover, though I left my brave Nisko at the farm, I have my gun. Game will be plentiful in the woods and gorges of the lower part of the mountain, and perhaps at the top we shall find a fire to cook it, already lighted."

"Already lighted, Mr. Smith?"

"And why not, Mr. Strock? These flames! These superb flames, which have so terrified our country folk! Is their fire absolutely cold, is no spark to be found beneath their ashes? And then, if this is truly a crater, is the vol-

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cano so wholly extinct that we cannot find there a single ember? Bah! This would be but a poor volcano if it hasn't enough fire even to cook an egg or roast a potato. Come, I repeat, we shall see! We shall see!"

At that point of the investigation I had, I confess, no opinion formed. I had my orders to examine the Great Eyrie. If it proved harmless, I would announce it, and people would be reassured. But at heart, I must admit, I had the very natural desire of a man possessed by the demon of curiosity. I should be glad, both for my own sake, and for the renown which would attach to my mission if the Great Eyrie proved the center of the most remarkable phenomena—of which I would discover the cause.

Our ascent began in this order. The two guides went in front to seek out the most practicable paths. Elias Smith and I followed more leisurely. We mounted by a narrow and not very steep gorge amid rocks and trees. A tiny stream trickled downward under our feet. During the rainy season or after a heavy shower, the water doubtless bounded from rock to rock in tumultuous cascades. But it evidently was fed only by the rain, for now we could scarcely trace its course. It could not be the outlet of any lake within the Great Eyrie.

After an hour of climbing, the slope became so steep that we had to turn, now to the right, now to the left; and our progress was much delayed. Soon the gorge became wholly impracticable; its cliff-like sides offered no sufficient foothold. We had to cling by branches, to crawl upon our knees. At this rate the top would not be reached before sundown.

"Faith!" cried Mr. Smith, stopping for breath, "I realize why the climbers of the Great Eyrie have been few, so few, that it has never been ascended within my knowledge."

"The fact is," I responded, "that it would be much toil for very little profit. And if we had not special reasons to persist in our attempt——"

"You never said a truer word," declared Harry Horn. "My comrade and I have scaled the Black Dome several times, but we never met such obstacles as these."

"The difficulties seem almost impassable," added James Bruck.

The question now was to determine to which side we

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should turn for a new route; to right, as to left, arose impenetrable masses of trees and bushes. In truth even the scaling of cliffs would have been more easy. Perhaps if we could get above this wooded slope we could advance with surer foot. Now, we could only go ahead blindly, and trust to the instincts of our two guides. James Bruck was especially useful. I believe that that gallant lad would have equaled a monkey in lightness and a wild goat in agility. Unfortunately, neither Elias Smith nor I was able to climb where he could.

However, when it is a matter of real need with me, I trust I shall never be backward, being resolute by nature and well-trained in bodily exercise. Where James Bruck went, I was determined to go, also; though it might cost me some uncomfortable falls. But it was not the same with the first magistrate of Morganton, less young, less vigorous, larger, stouter, and less persistent than we others. Plainly he made every effort, not to retard our progress, but he panted like a seal, and soon I insisted on his stopping to rest.

In short, it was evident that the ascent of the Great Eyrie would require far more time than we had estimated. We had expected to reach the foot of the rocky wall before eleven o'clock, but we now saw that mid-day would still find us several hundred feet below it.

Toward ten o'clock, after repeated attempts to discover some more practicable route, after numberless turnings and returnings, one of the guides gave the signal to halt. We found ourselves at last on the upper border of the heavy wood. The trees, more thinly spaced, permitted us a glimpse upward to the base of the rocky wall which constituted the true Great Eyrie.

"Whew!" exclaimed Mr. Smith, leaning against a mighty pine tree, "a little respite, a little repose, and even a little repast would not go badly."

"We will rest an hour," said I.

"Yes; after working our lungs and our legs, we will make our stomachs work."

We were all agreed on this point. A rest would certainly freshen us. Our only cause for inquietude was now the appearance of the precipitous slope above us. We looked up toward one of those bare strips called in that

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region, slides. Amid this loose earth, these yielding stones, and these abrupt rocks there was no roadway.

Harry Horn said to his comrade, "It will not be easy."

"Perhaps impossible," responded Bruck.

Their comments caused me secret uneasiness. If I returned without even having scaled the mountain, my mission would be a complete failure, without speaking of the torture to my curiosity. And when I stood again before Mr. Ward, shamed and confused, I should cut but a sorry figure.

We opened our knapsacks and lunched moderately on bread and cold meat. Our repast finished, in less than half an hour, Mr. Smith sprang up eager to push forward once more. James Bruck took the lead; and we had only to follow him as best we could.

We advanced slowly. Our guides did not attempt to conceal their doubt and hesitation. Soon Horn left us and went far ahead to spy out which road promised most chance of success.

Twenty minutes later he returned and led us onward toward the northwest. It was on this side that the Black Dome rose at a distance of three or four miles. Our path was still difficult and painful, amid the sliding stones, held in place only occasionally by wiry bushes. At length after a weary struggle, we gained some two hundred feet further upward and found ourselves facing a great gash, which broke the earth at this spot. Here and there were scattered roots recently uptorn, branches broken off, huge stones reduced to powder, as if an avalanche had rushed down this flank of the mountain.

"That must be the path taken by the huge block which broke away from the Great Eyrie," commented James Bruck.

"No doubt," answered Mr. Smith, "and I think we had better follow the road that it has made for us."

It was indeed this gash that Harry Horn had selected for our ascent. Our feet found lodgment in the firmer earth which had resisted the passage of the monster rock. Our task thus became much easier, and our progress was in a straight line upward, so that toward half past eleven we reached the upper border of the "slide."

Before us, less than a hundred feet away, but towering a

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hundred feet straight upwards in the air rose the rocky wall which formed the final crest, the last defence of the Great Eyrie.

From this side, the summit of the wall showed capriciously irregular, rising in rude towers and jagged needles. At one point the outline appeared to be an enormous eagle silhouetted against the sky, just ready to take flight. Upon this side, at least, the precipice was insurmountable.

"Rest a minute," said Mr. Smith, "and we will see if it is possible to make our way around the base of this cliff."

"At any rate," said Harry Horn, "the great block must have fallen from this part of the cliff; and it has left no breach for entering."

They were both right; we must seek entrance elsewhere. After a rest of ten minutes, we clambered up close to the foot of the wall, and began to make a circuit of its base.

Assuredly the Great Eyrie now took on to my eyes an aspect absolutely fantastic. Its heights seemed peopled by dragons and huge monsters. If chimeras, griffins, and all the creations of mythology had appeared to guard it, I should have been scarcely surprised.

With great difficulty and not without danger we continued our tour of this circumvallation, where it seemed that nature had worked as man does, with careful regularity. Nowhere was there any break in the fortification; nowhere a fault in the strata by which one might clamber up. Always this mighty wall, a hundred feet in height!

After an hour and a half of this laborious circuit, we regained our starting-place. I could not conceal my disappointment, and Mr. Smith was not less chagrined than I.

"A thousand devils!" cried he, "we know no better than before what is inside this confounded Great Eyrie, nor even if it is a crater."

"Volcano, or not," said I, "there are no suspicious noises now; neither smoke nor flame rises above it; nothing whatever threatens an eruption."

This was true. A profound silence reigned around us; and a perfectly clear sky shone overhead. We tasted the perfect calm of great altitudes.

It was worth noting that the circumference of the huge wall was about twelve or fifteen hundred feet. As to the space enclosed within, we could scarce reckon that without

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knowing the thickness of the encompassing wall. The surroundings were absolutely deserted. Probably not a living creature ever mounted to this height, except the few birds of prey which soared high above us.

Our watches showed three o'clock, and Mr. Smith cried in disgust, "What is the use of stopping here all day! We shall learn nothing more. We must make a start, Mr. Strock, if we want to get back to Pleasant Garden to-night."

I made no answer, and did not move from where I was seated; so he called again, "Come, Mr. Strock; you don't answer."

In truth, it cut me deeply to abandon our effort, to descend the slope without having achieved my mission. I felt an imperious need of persisting; my curiosity had redoubled. But what could I do? Could I tear open this unyielding earth? Overleap the mighty cliff? Throwing one last defiant glare at the Great Eyrie, I followed my companions.

The return was effected without great difficulty. We had only to slide down where we had so laboriously scrambled up. Before five o'clock we descended the last slopes of the mountain, and the farmer of Wildon welcomed us to a much needed meal.

"Then you didn't get inside?" said he.

"No," responded Mr. Smith, "and I believe that the inside exists only in the imagination of our country folk."

At half past eight our carriage drew up before the house of the Mayor of Pleasant Garden, where we passed the night. While I strove vainly to sleep, I asked myself if I should not stop there in the village and organize a new ascent. But what better chance had it of succeeding than the first? The wisest course was, doubtless, to return to Washington and consult Mr. Ward.

So, the next day, having rewarded our two guides, I took leave of Mr. Smith at Morganton, and that same evening left by train for Washington.

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CHAPTER IV

A MEETING OF THE AUTOMOBILE CLUB

WAS the mystery of the Great Eyrie to be solved some day by chances beyond our imagining? That was known only to the future. And was the solution a matter of the first importance? That was beyond doubt, since the safety of the people of western Carolina perhaps depended upon it.

Yet a fortnight after my return to Washington, public attention was wholly distracted from this problem by another very different in nature, but equally astonishing.

Toward the middle of that month of May the newspapers of Pennsylvania informed their readers of some strange occurrences in different parts of the state. On the roads which radiated from Philadelphia, the chief city, there circulated an extraordinary vehicle, of which no one could describe the form, or the nature, or even the size, so rapidly did it rush past. It was an automobile; all were agreed on that. But as to what motor drove it, only imagination could say; and when the popular imagination is aroused, what limit is there to its hypotheses?

At that period the most improved automobiles, whether driven by steam, gasoline, or electricity, could not accomplish much more than sixty miles an hour, a speed that the railroads, with their most rapid expresses, scarce exceed on the best lines of America and Europe. Now, this new automobile which was astonishing the world, traveled at more than double this speed.

It is needless to add that such a rate constituted an extreme danger on the highroads, as much so for vehicles, as for pedestrians. This rushing mass, coming like a thunder-bolt, preceded by a formidable rumbling, caused a whirlwind, which tore the branches from the trees along the road, terrified the animals browsing in adjoining fields, and scattered and killed the birds, which could not resist the suction of the tremendous air currents engendered by its passage.

And, a bizarre detail to which the newspapers drew particular attention, the surface of the roads was scarcely even scratched by the wheels of the apparition, which left behind it no such ruts as are usually made by heavy vehicles. At most there was a light touch, a mere brushing of the

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dust. It was only the tremendous speed which raised behind the vehicle such whirlwinds of dust.

"It is probable," commented the *New York Herald*, "that the extreme rapidity of motion destroys the weight."

Naturally there were protests from all sides. It was impossible to permit the mad speed of this apparition which threatened to overthrow and destroy everything in its passage, equipages and people. But how could it be stopped? No one knew to whom the vehicle belonged, nor whence it came, nor whither it went. It was seen but for an instant as it darted forward like a bullet in its dizzy flight. How could one seize a cannon-ball in the air, as it leaped from the mouth of the gun?

I repeat, there was no evidence as to the character of the propelling engine. It left behind it no smoke, no steam, no odor of gasoline, or any other oil. It seemed probable, therefore, that the vehicle ran by electricity, and that its accumulators were of an unknown model, using some unknown fluid.

The public imagination, highly excited, readily accepted every sort of rumor about this mysterious automobile. It was said to be a supernatural car. It was driven by a specter, by one of the chauffeurs of hell, a goblin from another world, a monster escaped from some mythological menagerie, in short, the devil in person, who could defy all human intervention, having at his command invisible and infinite satanic powers.

But even Satan himself had no right to run at such speed over the roads of the United States without a special permit, without a number on his car, and without a regular license. And it was certain that not a single municipality had given him permission to go two hundred miles an hour. Public security demanded that some means be found to unmask the secret of this terrible chauffeur.

Moreover, it was not only Pennsylvania that served as the theater of his sportive eccentricities. The police reported his appearance in other states; in Kentucky near Frankfort; in Ohio near Columbus; in Tennessee near Nashville; in Missouri near Jefferson; and finally in Illinois in the neighborhood of Chicago.

The alarm having been given, it became the duty of the authorities to take steps against this public danger. To ar-

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rest or even to halt an apparition moving at such speed was scarcely practicable. A better way would be to erect across the roads solid gateways with which the flying machine must come in contact sooner or later, and be smashed into a thousand pieces.

"Nonsense!" declared the incredulous. "This madman would know well how to circle around such obstructions."

"And if necessary," added others, "the machine would leap over the barriers."

"And if he is indeed the devil, he has, as a former angel, presumably preserved his wings, and so he will take to flight."

But this last was but the suggestion of foolish old gossips who did not stop to study the matter. For if the King of Hades possessed a pair of wings, why did he obstinately persist in running around on the earth at the risk of crushing his own subjects, when he might more easily have hurled himself through space as free as a bird.

Such was the situation when, in the last week of May, a fresh event occurred, which seemed to show that the United States was indeed helpless in the hands of some unapproachable monster. And after the New World, would not the Old in its turn, be desecrated by the mad career of this remarkable automobilist?

The following occurrence was reported in all the newspapers of the Union, and with what comments and outcries it is easy to imagine.

A race was to be held by the automobile Club of Wisconsin, over the roads of that state of which Madison is the capital. The route laid out formed an excellent track, about two hundred miles in length, starting from Prairie-du-chien on the western frontier, passing by Madison and ending a little above Milwaukee on the borders of Lake Michigan. Except for the Japanese road between Nikko and Namodé, bordered by giant cypresses, there is no better track in the world than this of Wisconsin. It runs straight and level as an arrow for sometimes fifty miles at a stretch. Many and noted were the machines entered for this great race. Every kind of motor vehicle was permitted to compete, even motorcycles, as well as automobiles. The machines were of all makes and nationalities. The

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sum of the different prizes reached fifty thousand dollars, so that the race was sure to be desperately contested. New records were expected to be made.

Calculating on the maximum speed hitherto attained, of perhaps eighty miles an hour, this international contest covering two hundred miles would last about three hours. And, to avoid all danger, the state authorities of Wisconsin had forbidden all other traffic between Prairie-du-chien and Milwaukee during three hours on the morning of the thirtieth of May. Thus, if there were any accidents, those who suffered would be themselves to blame.

There was an enormous crowd; and it was not composed only of the people of Wisconsin. Many thousands gathered from the neighboring states of Illinois, Michigan, Iowa, Indiana, and even from New York. Among the sportsmen assembled were many foreigners, English, French, Germans and Austrians, each nationality, of course, supporting the chauffeurs of its land. Moreover, as this was the United States, the country of the greatest gamblers of the world, bets were made of every sort and of enormous amounts.

The start was to be made at eight o'clock in the morning; and to avoid crowding and the accidents which must result from it, the automobiles were to follow each other at two minute intervals, along the roads whose borders were black with spectators.

The first ten racers, numbered by lot, were dispatched between eight o'clock and twenty minutes past. Unless there was some disastrous accident, some of these machines would surely arrive at the goal by eleven o'clock. The others followed in order.

An hour and a half had passed. There remained but a single contestant at Prairie-du-chien. Word was sent back and forth by telephone every five minutes as to the order of the racers. Midway between Madison and Milwaukee, the lead was held by a machine of Renault brothers, four cylindered, of twenty horsepower, and with Michelin tires. It was closely followed by a Harvard-Watson car and by a Dion-Bouton. Some accidents had already occurred, other machines were hopelessly behind. Not more than a dozen would contest the finish. Several chauffeurs had been injured, but not seriously. And even

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had they been killed, the death of men is but a detail, not considered of great importance in that astonishing country of America.

Naturally the excitement became more intense as one approached the finishing line near Milwaukee. There were assembled the most curious, the most interested; and there the passions of the moment were unchained. By ten o'clock it was evident, that the first prize, twenty thousand dollars, lay between five machines, two American, two French, and one English. Imagine, therefore, the fury with which bets were being made under the influence of national pride. The regular book makers could scarcely meet the demands of those who wished to wager. Offers and amounts were hurled from lip to lip with feverish rapidity. "One to three on the Harvard-Watson!"

"One to two on the Dion-Bouton!"

"Even money on the Renault!"

These cries rang along the line of spectators at each new announcement from the telephones.

Suddenly at half-past nine by the town clock of Prairie-du-chien, two miles beyond that town was heard a tremendous noise and rumbling which proceeded from the midst of a flying cloud of dust accompanied by shrieks like those of a naval siren.

Scarcely had the crowds time to draw to one side, to escape a destruction which would have included hundreds of victims. The cloud swept by like a hurricane. No one could distinguish what it was that passed with such speed. There was no exaggeration in saying that its rate was at least one hundred and fifty miles an hour.

The apparition passed and disappeared in an instant, leaving behind it a long train of white dust, as an express locomotive leaves behind a train of smoke. Evidently it was an automobile with a most extraordinary motor. If it maintained this arrow-like speed, it would reach the contestants in the fore-front of the race; it would pass them with this speed double their own; it would arrive first at the goal.

And then from all parts arose an uproar, as soon as the spectators had nothing more to fear.

"It is that infernal machine."

"Yes; the one the police cannot stop."

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"But it has not been heard of for a fortnight."

"It was supposed to be done for, destroyed, gone forever."

"It is a devil's car, driven by hellfire, and with Satan driving!"

In truth, if he were not the devil, who could this mysterious chauffeur be, driving with this unbelievable velocity, his no less mysterious machine? At least it was beyond doubt that this was the same machine which had already attracted so much attention. If the police believed that they had frightened it away, that it was never to be heard of more, well, the police were mistaken—which happens in America as elsewhere.

The first stunned moment of surprise having passed, many people rushed to the telephones to warn those further along the route of the danger which menaced, not only the people, but also the automobiles scattered along the road.

When this terrible madman arrived like an avalanche they would be smashed to pieces, ground into powder, annihilated!

And from the collision might not the destroyer himself emerge safe and sound? He must be so adroit, this chauffeur of chauffeurs, he must handle his machine with such perfection of eye and hand, that he knew, no doubt, how to escape from every situation. Fortunately the Wisconsin authorities had taken such precautions that the road would be clear except for contesting automobiles. But what right had this machine among them!

And what said the racers themselves, who, warned by telephone, had to sheer aside from the road in their struggle for the grand prize? By their estimate, this amazing vehicle was going at least one hundred and thirty miles an hour. Fast as was their speed, it shot by them at such a rate that they could hardly make out even the shape of the machine, a sort of lengthened spindle, probably not over thirty feet long. Its wheels spun with such velocity that they could scarce be seen. For the rest, the machine left behind it neither smoke nor scent.

As for the driver, hidden in the interior of his machine, he had been quite invisible. He remained as unknown as when he had first appeared on the various roads throughout the country.

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Milwaukee was promptly warned of the coming of this interloper. Fancy the excitement the news caused! The immediate purpose agreed upon was to stop this projectile, to erect across its route an obstacle against which it would smash into a thousand pieces. But was there time? Would not the machine appear at any moment? And what need was there, since the track ended on the edge of Lake Michigan, and so the vehicle would be forced to stop there anyway, unless its supernatural driver could ride the water as well as the land.

Here, also, as all along the route, the most extravagant suggestions were offered. Even those who would not admit that the mysterious chauffeur must be Satan in person, allowed that he might be some monster escaped from the fantastic visions of the Apocalypse.

And now there were no longer minutes to wait. Any second might bring the expected apparition.

It was not yet eleven o'clock when a rumbling was heard far down the track, and the dust rose in violent whirlwinds. Harsh whistlings shrieked through the air warning all to give passage to the monster.

It did not slacken speed at the finish. Lake Michigan was not half a mile beyond, and the machine must certainly be hurled into the water! Could it be that the mechanician was no longer master of his mechanism?

There could be little doubt of it. Like a shooting star, the vehicle flashed through Milwaukee. When it had passed the city, would it plunge itself to destruction in the waters of Lake Michigan?

At any rate when it disappeared at a slight bend in the road no trace was to be found of its passage.

CHAPTER V

ALONG THE SHORES OF NEW ENGLAND

At the time when the newspapers were filled with these reports, I was again in Washington. On my return I had presented myself at my chief's office, but had been unable to see him. Family affairs had suddenly called him away, to be absent some weeks. Mr. Ward, however, undoubtedly knew of the failure of my mission. The newspapers, es-

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pecially those of North Carolina, had given full details of our ascent of the Great Eyrie.

Naturally, I was much annoyed by this delay which further fretted my restless curiosity. I could turn to no other plans for the future. Could I give up the hope of learning the secret of the Great Eyrie? No! I would return to the attack a dozen times if necessary, and despite every failure.

Surely, the winning of access within those walls was not a task beyond human power. A scaffolding might be raised to the summit of the cliff; or a tunnel might be pierced through its depth. Our engineers met problems more difficult every day. But in this case it was necessary to consider the expense, which might easily grow out of proportion to the advantages to be gained. A tunnel would cost many thousand dollars, and what good would it accomplish beyond satisfying the public curiosity and my own?

My personal resources were wholly insufficient for the achievement. Mr. Ward, who held the government's funds, was away. I even thought of trying to interest some millionaire. Oh, if I could but have promised one of them some gold or silver mines within the mountain! But such an hypothesis was not admissible. The chain of the Appalachians is not situated in a gold bearing region like that of the Pacific mountains, the Transvaal, or Australia.

It was not until the fifteenth of June that Mr. Ward returned to duty. Despite my lack of success he received me warmly. "Here is our poor Strock!" cried he, at my entrance. "Our poor Strock, who has failed!"

"No more, Mr. Ward, than if you had charged me to investigate the surface of the moon," answered I. "We found ourselves face to face with purely natural obstacles insurmountable with the forces then at our command."

"I do not doubt that, Strock, I do not doubt that in the least. Nevertheless, the fact remains that you have discovered nothing of what is going on within the Great Eyrie."

"Nothing, Mr. Ward."

"You saw no sign of fire?"

"None."

"And you heard no suspicious noises whatever?"

"None."

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"Then it is still uncertain if there is really a volcano there?"

"Still uncertain, Mr. Ward. But if it is there, we have good reason to believe that it has sunk into a profound sleep."

"Still," returned Mr. Ward, "there is nothing to show that it will not wake up again any day, Strock. It is not enough that a volcano should sleep, it must be absolutely extinguished—unless indeed all these threatening rumors have been born solely in the Carolinian imagination."

"That is not possible, sir," I said. "Both Mr. Smith, the mayor of Morganton and his friend the mayor of Pleasant Garden, are reliable men. And they speak from their own knowledge in this matter. Flames have certainly risen above the Great Eyrie. Strange noises have issued from it. There can be no doubt whatever of the reality of these phenomena."

"Granted," declared Mr. Ward. "I admit that the evidence is unassailable. So the deduction to be drawn is that the Great Eyrie has not yet given up its secret."

"If we are determined to know it, Mr. Ward, the solution is only a solution of expense. Pickaxes and dynamite would soon conquer those walls."

"No doubt," responded the chief, "but such an undertaking hardly seems justified, since the mountain is now quiet. We will wait awhile and perhaps nature herself will disclose her mystery."

"Mr. Ward, believe me that I regret deeply that I have been unable to solve the problem you entrusted to me," I said.

"Nonsense! Do not upset yourself, Strock. Take your defeat philosophically. We cannot always be successful, even in the police. How many criminals escape us! I believe we should never capture one of them, if they were a little more intelligent and less imprudent, and if they did not compromise themselves so stupidly. Nothing, it seems to me, would be easier than to plan a crime, a theft or an assassination, and to execute it without arousing any suspicions, or leaving any traces to be followed. You understand, Strock, I do not want to give our criminals lessons; I much prefer to have them remain as they are. Nevertheless there are many whom the police will never be able to track down."

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On this matter I shared absolutely the opinion of my chief. It is among rascals that one finds the most fools. For this very reason I had been much surprised that none of the authorities had been able to throw any light upon the recent performances of the "demon automobile." And when Mr. Ward brought up this subject, I did not conceal from him my astonishment.

He pointed out that the vehicle was practically unpursuable; that in its earlier appearances, it had apparently vanished from all roads even before a telephone message could be sent ahead. Active and numerous police agents had been spread throughout the country, but no one of them had encountered the delinquent. He did not move continuously from place to place, even at his amazing speed, but seemed to appear only for a moment and then to vanish into thin air. True, he had at length remained visible along the entire route from Prairie-du-Chien to Milwaukee, and he had covered in less than an hour and a half this track of two hundred miles.

But since then, there had been no news whatever of the machine. Arrived at the end of the route, driven onward by its own impetus, unable to stop, had it indeed been engulfed within the waters of Lake Michigan? Must we conclude that the machine and its driver had both perished, that there was no longer any danger to be feared from either? The great majority of the public refused to accept this conclusion. They fully expected the machine to reappear.

Mr. Ward frankly admitted that the whole matter seemed to him most extraordinary; and I shared his view. Assuredly if this infernal chauffeur did not return, his apparition would have to be placed among those superhuman mysteries which it is not given to man to understand.

We had fully discussed this affair, the chief and I; and I thought that our interview was at an end, when, after pacing the room for a few moments, he said abruptly, "Yes, what happened there at Milwaukee was very strange. But here is something no less so!"

With this he handed me a report which he had received from Boston, on a subject of which the evening papers had just begun to apprise their readers. While I read it, Mr. Ward was summoned from the room. I seated myself by

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the window and studied with extreme attention the matter of the report.

For some days the waters along the coast of Maine, Connecticut, and Massachusetts had been the scene of an appearance which no one could exactly describe. A moving body would appear amid the waters, some two or three miles off shore, and go through rapid evolutions. It would flash for a while back and forth among the waves and then dart out of sight.

The body moved with such lightning speed that the best telescopes could hardly follow it. Its length did not seem to exceed thirty feet. Its cigar-shaped form and greenish color, made it difficult to distinguish against the background of the ocean. It had been most frequently observed along the coast between Cape Cod and Nova Scotia. From Providence, from Boston, from Portsmouth, and from Portland motor boats and steam launches had repeatedly attempted to approach this moving body and even to give it chase. They could not get anywhere near it. Pursuit seemed useless. It darted like an arrow beyond the range of view.

Naturally, widely differing opinions were held as to the nature of this object. But no hypothesis rested on any secure basis. Seamen were as much at a loss as others. At first sailors thought it must be some great fish, like a whale. But it is well known that all these animals come to the surface with a certain regularity to breathe, and spout up columns of mingled air and water. Now, this strange animal, if it was an animal, had never "blown" as the whalers say; nor, had it ever made any noises of breathing. Yet if it were not one of these huge marine mammals, how was this unknown monster to be classed? Did it belong among the legendary dwellers in the deep, the krakens, the octopuses, the leviathans, the famous sea-serpents?

At any rate, since this monster, whatever it was, had appeared along the New England shores, the little fishing-smacks and pleasure boats dared not venture forth. Wherever it appeared the boats fled to the nearest harbor, as was but prudent. If the animal was of a ferocious character, none cared to await its attack.

As to the large ships and coast steamers, they had nothing to fear from any monster, whale or otherwise. Several of

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them had seen this creature at a distance of some miles. But when they attempted to approach, it fled rapidly away. One day, even, a fast United States gun boat went out from Boston, if not to pursue the monster, at least to send after it a few cannon shot. Almost instantly the animal disappeared, and the attempt was vain. As yet, however, the monster had shown no intention of attacking either boats or people.

At this moment Mr. Ward returned and I interrupted my reading to say, "There seems as yet no reason to complain of this sea-serpent. It flees before big ships. It does not pursue little ones. Feeling and intelligence are not very strong in fishes."

"Yet their emotions exist, Strock, and if strongly aroused——"

"But, Mr. Ward, the beast seems not at all dangerous. One of two things will happen. Either it will presently quit these coasts, or finally it will be captured and we shall be able to study it at our leisure here in the museum of Washington."

"And if it is not a marine animal?" asked Mr. Ward.

"What else can it be?" I protested in surprise.

"Finish your reading," said Mr. Ward.

I did so; and found that in the second part of the report, my chief had underlined some passages in red pencil.

For some time no one had doubted that this was an animal; and that, if it were vigorously pursued, it would at last be driven from our shores. But a change of opinion had come about. People began to ask if, instead of a fish, this were not some new and remarkable kind of boat.

Certainly in that case its engine must be one of amazing power. Perhaps the inventor before selling the secret of his invention, sought to attract public attention and to astound the maritime world. Such surety in the movements of his boat, grace in its every evolution, such ease in defying pursuit by its arrow-like speed, surely, these were enough to arouse world-wide curiosity!

At that time great progress had been made in the manufacture of marine engines. Huge transatlantic steamers completed the ocean passage in five days. And the engineers had not yet spoken their last word. Neither were the navies of the world behindhand. The cruisers, the torpedo

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boats, the torpedo-destroyers, could match the swiftest steamers of the Atlantic and Pacific, or of the Indian trade.

If, however, this were a boat of some new design, there had as yet been no opportunity to observe its form. As to the engines which drove it, they must be of a power far beyond the fastest known. By what force they worked, was equally a problem. Since the boat had no sails, it was not driven by the wind; and since it had no smoke-stack, it was not driven by steam.

At this point in the report, I again paused in my reading and considered the comment I wished to make.

"What are you puzzling over, Strock?" demanded my chief.

"It is this, Mr. Ward; the motive power of this so-called boat must be as tremendous and as unknown as that of the remarkable automobile which has so amazed us all."

"So that is your idea, is it, Strock?"

"Yes, Mr. Ward."

There was but one conclusion to be drawn. If the mysterious chauffeur had disappeared, if he had perished with his machine in Lake Michigan, it was equally important now to win the secret of this no less mysterious navigator. And it must be won before he in his turn plunged into the abyss of the ocean. Was it not the interest of the inventor to disclose his invention? Would not the American government or any other give him any price he chose to ask?

Yet unfortunately, since the inventor of the terrestrial apparition had persisted in preserving his incognito, was it not to be feared that the inventor of the marine apparition would equally preserve his? Even if the first machine still existed, it was no longer heard from; and would not the second, in the same way, after having disclosed its powers, disappear in its turn, without a single trace?

What gave weight to this probability was that since the arrival of this report at Washington twenty-four hours before, the presence of the extraordinary boat had not been announced from anywhere along the shore. Neither had it been seen on any other coast. Though, of course, the assertion that it would not reappear at all, would have been hazardous, to say the least.

I noted another interesting and possibly important point. It was a singular coincidence which indeed Mr. Ward sug-

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gested to me, at the same moment that I was considering it. This was that only after the disappearance of the wonderful automobile had the no less wonderful boat come into view. Moreover, their engines both possessed a most dangerous power of locomotion. If both should go rushing at the same time over the face of the world, the same danger would threaten mankind everywhere, in boats, in vehicles, and on foot. Therefore it was absolutely necessary that the police should in some manner interfere to protect the public ways of travel.

That is what Mr. Ward pointed out to me; and our duty was obvious. But how could we accomplish this task? We discussed the matter for some time; and I was just about to leave when Mr. Ward made one last suggestion.

"Have you not observed, Strock," said he, "that there is a sort of fantastic resemblance between the general appearance of this boat and this automobile?"

"There is something of the sort, Mr. Ward."

"Well, is it not possible that the two are one?"

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST LETTER

After leaving Mr. Ward I returned to my home in Long Street. There I had plenty of time to consider this strange case uninterrupted by either wife or children. My household consisted solely of an ancient servant, who having been formerly in the service of my mother, had now continued for fifteen years in mine.

Two months before I had obtained a leave of absence. It had still two weeks to run, unless indeed some unforeseen circumstance interrupted it, some mission which could not be delayed. This leave, as I have shown, had already been interrupted for four days by my exploration of the Great Eyrie.

And now was it not my duty to abandon my vacation, and endeavor to throw light upon the remarkable events of which the road to Milwaukee and the shore of New England had been in turn the scene? I would have given much to solve the twin mysteries, but how was it possible to follow the track of this automobile or this boat?

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Seated in my easy chair after breakfast, with my pipe lighted, I opened my newspaper. To what should I turn? Politics interested me but little, with its eternal strife between the Republicans and the Democrats. Neither did I care for the news of society, nor for the sporting page. You will not be surprised, then, that my first idea was to see if there was any news from North Carolina about the Great Eyrie. There was little hope of this, however, for Mr. Smith had promised to telegraph me at once if anything occurred. I felt quite sure that the mayor of Morganton was as eager for information and as watchful as I could have been myself. The paper told me nothing new. It dropped idly from my hand; and I remained deep in thought.

What most frequently recurred to me was the suggestion of Mr. Ward that perhaps the automobile and the boat which had attracted our attention were in reality one and the same. Very probably, at least, the two machines had been built by the same hand. And beyond doubt, these were similar engines, which generated this remarkable speed, more than doubling the previous records of earth and sea.

"The same inventor!" repeated I.

Evidently this hypothesis had strong grounds. The fact that the two machines had not yet appeared at the same time added weight to the idea. I murmured to myself, "After the mystery of Great Eyrie, comes that of Milwaukee and Boston. Will this new problem be as difficult to solve as was the other?"

I noted idly that this new affair had a general resemblance to the other, since both menaced the security of the general public. To be sure, only the inhabitants of the Blueridge region had been in danger from an eruption or possible earthquake at Great Eyrie. While now, on every road of the United States, or along every league of its coasts and harbors, every inhabitant was in danger from this vehicle or this boat, with its sudden appearance and insane speed.

I found that, as was to be expected, the newspapers not only suggested, but enlarged upon the dangers of the case. Timid people everywhere were much alarmed. My old servant, naturally credulous and superstitious, was par-

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ticularly upset. That same day after dinner, as she was clearing away the things, she stopped before me, a water bottle in one hand, the serviette in the other, and asked anxiously, "Is there no news, sir?"

"None," I answered, knowing well to what she referred.

"The automobile has not come back?"

"No."

"Nor the boat?"

"Nor the boat. There is no news even in the best informed papers."

"But——your secret police information?"

"We are no wiser."

"Then, sir, if you please, of what use are the police?"

It is a question which has phased me more than once.

"Now you see what will happen," continued the old housekeeper, complainingly, "Some fine morning, he will come without warning, this terrible chauffeur, and rush down our street here, and kill us all!"

"Good! When that happens, there will be some chance of catching him."

"He will never be arrested, sir."

"Why not?"

"Because he is the devil himself, and you can't arrest the devil!"

Decidedly, thought I, the devil has many uses; and if he did not exist we would have to invent him, to give people some way of explaining the inexplicable. It was he who lit the flames of the Great Eyrie. It was he who smashed the record in the Wisconsin race. It is he who is scurrying along the shores of Connecticut and Massachusetts. But putting to one side this evil spirit who is so necessary, for the convenience of the ignorant, there was no doubt that we were facing a most bewildering problem. Had both of these machines disappeared forever? They had passed like a meteor, like a star shooting through space; and in a hundred years the adventure would become a legend, much to the taste of the gossips of the next century.

For several days the newspapers of America and even those of Europe continued to discuss these events. Editorials crowded upon editorials. Rumors were added to rumors. Story tellers of every kind crowded to the front. The public of two continents was interested. In some

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parts of Europe there was even jealousy that America should have been chosen as the field of such an experience. If these marvelous inventors were American, then their country, their army and navy, would have a great advantage over others. The United States might acquire an incontestable superiority.

Under the date of the tenth of June, a New York paper published a carefully studied article on this phase of the subject. Comparing the speed of the swiftest known vessels with the smallest minimum of speed which could possibly be assigned to the new boat, the article demonstrated that if the United States secured this secret, Europe would be but three days away from her, while she would still be five days from Europe.

If our own police had searched diligently to discover the mystery of the Great Eyrie, the secret service of every country in the world was now interested in these new problems.

Mr. Ward referred to the matter each time I saw him. Our chat would begin by his rallying me about my ill-success in Carolina, and I would respond by reminding him that success there was only a question of expense.

"Never mind, my good Strock," said he, "there will come a chance for our clever inspector to regain his laurels. Take now this affair of the automobile and the boat. If you could clear that up in advance of all the detectives of the world, what an honor it would be to our department! What glory for you!"

"It certainly would, Mr. Ward. And if you put the matter in my charge——"

"Who knows, Strock? Let us wait a while! Let us wait!"

Matters stood thus when, on the morning of June fifteenth, my old servant brought me a letter from the letter-carrier, a registered letter for which I had to sign. I looked at the address. I did not know the handwriting. The postmark, dating from two days before, was stamped at the post office of Morganton.

Morganton! Here at last was, no doubt, news from Mr. Elias Smith.

"Yes!" exclaimed I, speaking to my old servant, for lack of another, "it must be from Mr. Smith at last. I know

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no one else in Morganton. And if he writes he has news!"

"Morganton?" said the old woman, "isn't that the place where the demons set fire to their mountain?"

"Exactly."

"Oh, sir! I hope you don't mean to go back there!"

"Why not?"

"Because you will end by being burned up in that furnace of the Great Eyrie. And I wouldn't want you buried that way, sir."

"Cheer up, and let us see if it is not better news than that."

The envelope was sealed with red sealing wax, and stamped with a sort of coat of arms, surmounted with three stars. The paper was thick and very strong. I broke the envelope and drew out a letter. It was a single sheet, folded in four, and written on one side only. My first glance was for the signature.

There was no signature! Nothing but three initials at the end of the last line!

"The letter is not from the Mayor of Morganton," said I.

"Then from whom?" asked the old servant, doubly curious in her quality as a woman and as an old gossip.

Looking again at the three initials of the signature, I said, "I know no one for whom these letters would stand; neither at Morganton nor elsewhere."

The hand-writing was bold. Both up strokes and down strokes very sharp, about twenty lines in all. Here is the letter, of which I, with good reason, retained an exact copy. It was dated, to my extreme stupefaction, from that mysterious Great Eyrie:

"Great Eyrie, Blueridge Mtns,
"To Mr. Strock: North Carolina, June 13th.
Chief Inspector of Police,
34 Long St., Washington, D. C.

"Sir,

"You were charged with the mission of penetrating the Great Eyrie.

"You came on April the twenty-eighth, accompanied by the Mayor of Morganton and two guides.

"You mounted to the foot of the wall, and you encircled it, finding it too high and steep to climb.

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"You sought a breech and you found none.

"Know this: none enter the Great Eyrie; or if one enters, he never returns.

"Do not try again, for the second attempt will not result as did the first, but will have grave consequences for you.

"Heed this warning, or evil fortune will come to you.

"M. o. W."

CHAPTER VII

A THIRD MACHINE

I CONFESS that at first this letter dumfounded me. "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" slipped from my open mouth. The old servant stared at me, not knowing what to think.

"Oh, sir! is it bad news?"

I answered—for I kept few secrets from this faithful soul—by reading her the letter from end to end. She listened with much anxiety.

"A joke, without doubt," said I, shrugging my shoulders.

"Well," returned my superstitious handmaid, "if it isn't from the devil, it's from the devil's country, anyway."

Left alone, I again went over this unexpected letter. Reflection inclined me yet more strongly to believe that it was the work of a practical joker. My adventure was well-known. The newspapers had given it in full detail. Some satirist, such as exists even in America, must have written this threatening letter to mock me.

To assume, on the other hand, that the Eyrie really served as the refuge of a band of criminals, seemed absurd. If they feared that the police would discover their retreat, surely they would not have been so foolish as thus to force attention upon themselves. Their chief security would lie in keeping their presence there unknown. They must have realized that such a challenge from them would only arouse the police to renewed activity. Dynamite or melinite would soon open an entrance to their fortress. Moreover, how could these men have, themselves, gained entrance into the Eyrie—unless there existed a passage which we had failed to discover? Assuredly the letter came from a jester or a madman; and I need not worry over it, nor even consider it.

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Hence, though for an instant I had thought of showing this letter to Mr. Ward, I decided not to do so. Surely he would attach no importance to it. However, I did not destroy it, but locked it in my desk for safe keeping. If more letters came of the same kind, and with the same initials, I would attach as little weight to them as to this.

Several days passed quietly. There was nothing to lead me to expect that I should soon quit Washington; though in my line of duty one is never certain of the morrow. At any moment I might be sent speeding from Oregon to Florida, from Maine to Texas. And—this unpleasant thought haunted me frequently—if my next mission were no more successful than that to the Great Eyrie, I might as well give up and hand in my resignation from the force. Of the mysterious chauffeur or chauffeurs, nothing more was heard. I knew that our own government agents, as well as foreign ones, were keeping keen watch over all the roads and rivers, all the lakes and the coasts of America. Of course, the size of the country made any close supervision impossible; but these twin inventors had not before chosen secluded and unfrequented spots in which to appear. The main highway of Wisconsin on a great race day, the harbor of Boston, incessantly crossed by thousands of boats, these were hardly what would be called hiding-places! If the daring driver had not perished—of which there was always strong probability; then he must have left America. Perhaps he was in the waters of the Old World, or else resting in some retreat known only to himself, and in that case——

"Ah!" I repeated to myself, many times, "for such a retreat, as secret as inaccessible, this fantastic personage could not find one better than the Great Eyrie!" But, of course, a boat could not get there, any more than an automobile. Only high-flying birds of prey, eagles or condors, could find refuge there.

The nineteenth of June I was going to the police bureau, when, on leaving my house, I noticed two men who looked at me with a certain keenness. Not knowing them, I took no notice; and if my attention was drawn to the matter, it was because my servant spoke of it when I returned.

For some days, she said, she had noticed that two men seemed to be spying upon me in the street. They stood

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constantly, perhaps a hundred steps from my house; and she suspected that they followed me each time I went up the street.

"You are sure?" I asked.

"Yes, sir and no longer ago than yesterday, when you came into the house, these men came slipping along in your footsteps, and then went away as soon as the door was shut behind you."

"You must be mistaken?"

"I am not, sir."

"And if you met these two men, you would know them?"

"I would."

"Good;" I cried, laughing, "I see you have the very spirit for a detective. I must engage you as a member of our force."

"Joke if you like, sir. But I have still two good eyes, and I don't need spectacles to recognize people. Someone is spying on you, that's certain; and you should put some of your men to track them in turn."

"All right; I promise to do so," I said, to satisfy her. "And when my men get after them, we shall soon know what these mysterious fellows want of me."

In truth I did not take the good soul's excited announcement very seriously. I added, however, "When I go out, I will watch the people around me with great care."

"That will be best, sir."

My poor old housekeeper was always frightening herself at nothing. "If I see them again," she added, "I will warn you before you set foot out of doors.

"Agreed!" And I broke off the conversation, knowing well that if I allowed her to run on, she would end by being sure that Beelzebub himself and one of his chief attendants were at my heels.

The two following days, there was certainly no one spying on me, either at my exits or entrances. So I concluded my old servant had made much of nothing, as usual. But on the morning of the twenty-second of June, after rushing upstairs as rapidly as her age would permit, the devoted old soul burst into my room and in a half whisper gasped "Sir! Sir!"

"What is it?"

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"They are there!"

"Who?" I queried, my mind on anything but the web she had been spinning about me.

"The two spies!"

"Ah, those wonderful spies!"

"Themselves!—In the street!—Right in front of our windows!—Watching the house, waiting for you to go out."

I went to the window and raising just an edge of the shade, so as not to give any warning, I saw two men on the pavement.

They were rather fine-looking men, broad-shouldered and vigorous, aged somewhat under forty, dressed in the ordinary fashion of the day, with slouched hats, heavy woolen suits, stout walking shoes and sticks in hand. Undoubtedly, they were staring persistently at my apparently unwatchful house. Then, having exchanged a few words, they strolled off a little way, and returned again.

"Are you sure these are the same men you saw before?"

"Yes, sir."

Evidently, I could no longer dismiss her warning as an hallucination; and I promised myself to clear up the matter. As to following the men myself, I was presumably too well known to them. To address them directly would probably be of no use. But that very day, one of our best men should be put on watch, and if the spies returned on the morrow, they should be tracked in their turn, and watched until their identity was established.

At the moment, they were waiting to follow me to police headquarters? For it was there that I was bound, as usual. If they accompanied me I might be able to offer them a hospitality for which they would scarce thank me.

I took my hat; and while the housekeeper remained peeping from the window, I went down stairs, opened the door, and stepped into the street.

The two men were no longer there.

Despite all my watchfulness, that day I saw no more of them as I passed along the streets. From that time on, indeed, neither my old servant nor I saw them again before the house, nor did I encounter them elsewhere. Their appearance, however, was stamped upon my memory, I would not forget them.

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Perhaps after all, admitting that I had been the object of their espionage, they had been mistaken in my identity. Having obtained a good look at me, they now followed me no more. So in the end, I came to regard this matter as of no more importance than the letter with the initials, M. o. W.

Then, on the twenty-fourth of June, there came a new event, to further stimulate both my interest and that of the general public in the previous mysteries of the automobile and the boat. The Washington *Evening Star* published the following account, which was next morning copied by every paper in the country.

"Lake Kirdall in Kansas, forty miles west of Topeka, is little known. It deserves wider knowledge, and doubtless will have it hereafter, for attention is now drawn to it in a very remarkable way.

"This lake, deep among the mountains, appears to have no outlet. What it loses by evaporation, it regains from the little neighboring streamlets and the heavy rains.

"Lake Kirdall covers about seventy-five square miles, and its level is but slightly below that of the heights which surround it. Shut in among the mountains, it can be reached only by narrow and rocky gorges. Several villages, however, have sprung up upon its banks. It is full of fish, and fishing-boats cover its waters.

"Lake Kirdall is in many places fifty feet deep close to shore. Sharp, pointed rocks form the edges of this huge basin. Its surges, roused by high winds, beat upon its banks with fury, and the houses near at hand are often deluged with spray as if with the downpour of a hurricane. The lake, already deep at the edge, becomes yet deeper toward the center, where in some places soundings show over three hundred feet of water.

"The fishing industry supports a population of several thousands, and there are several hundred fishing boats in addition to the dozen or so of little steamers which serve the traffic of the lake. Beyond the circle of the mountains lie the railroads which transport the products of the fishing industry throughout Kansas and the neighboring states.

"This account of Lake Kirdall is necessary for the understanding of the remarkable facts which we are about to report."

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And this is what the *Evening Star* then reported in its startling article. "For some time past, the fishermen have noticed a strange upheaval in the waters of the lake. Sometimes it rises as if a wave surged up from its depths. Even in perfectly calm weather, when there is no wind whatever, this upheaval sometimes arises in a mass of foam.

"Tossed about by violent waves and unaccountable currents, boats have been swept beyond all control. Sometimes they have been dashed one against another, and serious damage has resulted.

"This confusion of the waters evidently has its origin somewhere in the depths of the lake; and various explanations have been offered to account for it. At first, it was suggested that the trouble was due to seismic forces, to some volcanic action beneath the lake; but this hypothesis had to be rejected when it was recognized that the disturbance was not confined to one locality, but spread itself over the entire surface of the lake, either at one part or another, in the center or along the edges, traveling along almost in a regular line and in a way to exclude entirely all idea of earthquake or volcanic action.

"Another hypothesis suggested that it was a marine monster who thus upheaved the waters. But unless the beast had been born in the lake and had there grown to its gigantic proportions unsuspected, which was scarce possible, he must have come there from outside. Lake Kirdall, however, has no connection with any other waters. If this lake were situated near any of the oceans, there might be subterranean canals; but in the center of America, and at the height of some thousands of feet above sea-level, this is not possible. In short, here is another riddle not easy to solve, and it is much easier to point out the impossibility of false explanations, than to discover the true one.

"Is it possible that a submarine boat is being experimented with beneath the lake? Such boats are no longer impossible to-day. Some years ago, at Bridgeport, Connecticut, there was launched a boat, *The Protector,* which could go on the water, under the water, and also upon land. Built by an inventor named Lake, supplied with two motors, an electric one of seventy-five horse power, and a gasoline one of two hundred and fifty horse power, it was also pro-

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vided with wheels a yard in diameter, which enabled it to roll over the roads, as well as swim the seas.

"But even then, granting that the turmoil of Lake Kirdall might be produced by a submarine, brought to a high degree of perfection, there remains as before the question how could it have reached Lake Kirdall? The lake, shut in on all sides by a circle of mountains, is no more accessible to a submarine than to a sea-monster.

"In whatever way this last puzzling question may be solved, the nature of this strange appearance can no longer be disputed since the twentieth of June. On that day, in the afternoon, the schooner *Markel* while speeding with all sails set, came into violent collision with something just below the water level. There was no shoal nor rock near; for the lake in this part is eighty or ninety feet deep. The schooner with both her bow and her side badly broken, ran great danger of sinking. She managed, however, to reach the shore before her decks were completely submerged.

"When the *Markel* had been pumped out and hauled up on shore, an examination showed that she had received a blow near the bow as if from a powerful ram.

"From this it seems evident that there is actually a submarine boat which darts about beneath the surface of Lake Kirdall with most remarkable rapidity.

"The thing is difficult to explain. Not only is there a question as to how did the submarine get there? But why is it there? Why does it never come to the surface? What reason has its owner for remaining unknown? Are other disasters to be expected from its reckless course?"

The article in the *Evening Star* closed with this truly striking suggestion: "After the mysterious automobile, came the mysterious boat. Now comes the mysterious submarine.

"Must we conclude that the three engines are due to the genius of the same inventor, and that the three vehicles are in truth but one?"

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CHAPTER VIII
AT ANY COST

THE suggestion of the *Star* came like a revelation. It was accepted everywhere. Not only were these three vehicles the work of the same inventor; they were the same machine!

It was not easy to see how the remarkable transformation could be practically accomplished from one means of locomotion to the other. How could an automobile become a boat, and yet more, a submarine? All the machine seemed to lack was the power of flying through the air. Nevertheless, everything that was known of the three different machines, as to their size, their shape, their lack of odor or of steam, and above all their remarkable speed, seemed to imply their identity. The public, grown blasé with so many excitements, found in this new marvel a stimulus to reawaken their curiosity.

The newspapers dwelt now chiefly on the importance of the invention. This new engine, whether in one vehicle or three, had given proofs of its power. What amazing proofs! The invention must be bought at any price. The United States government must purchase it at once for the use of the nation. Assuredly, the great European powers would stop at nothing to be beforehand with America, and gain possession of an engine so invaluable for military and naval use. What incalculable advantages would it give to any nation, both on land and sea! Its destructive powers could not even be estimated, until its qualities and limitations were better known. No amount of money would be too great to pay for the secret; America could not put her millions to better use.

But to buy the machine, it was necessary to find the inventor; and there seemed the chief difficulty. In vain was Lake Kirdall searched from end to end. Even its depths were explored with a sounding-line without result. Must it be concluded that the submarine no longer lurked beneath its waters? But in that case, how had the boat gotten away? For that matter, how had it come? An insoluble problem!

The submarine was heard from no more, neither in Lake Kirdall nor elsewhere. It had disappeared like the automobile from the roads, and like the boat from the shores

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of America. Several times in my interviews with Mr. Ward, we discussed this matter, which still filled his mind. Our men continued everywhere on the lookout, but as unsuccessfully as other agents.

On the morning of the twenty-seventh of June, I was summoned into the presence of Mr. Ward.

"Well, Strock," said he, "here is a splendid chance for you to get your revenge."

"Revenge for the Great Eyrie disappointment?"

"Of course."

"What chance?" asked I, not knowing if he spoke seriously, or in jest.

"Why, here," he answered. "Would not you like to discover the inventor of this three-fold machine?"

"I certainly should, Mr. Ward. Give me the order to take charge of the matter, and I will accomplish the impossible, in order to succeed. It is true, I believe it will be difficult."

"Undoubtedly, Strock. Perhaps even more difficult than to penetrate into the Great Eyrie."

It was evident that Mr. Ward was intent on rallying me about my unsuccess. He would not do that, I felt assured, out of mere unkindness. Perhaps then he meant to rouse my resolution. He knew me well; and realized that I would have given anything in the world to recoup my defeat. I waited quietly for new instructions.

Mr. Ward dropped his jesting and said to me very generously, "I know, Strock, that you accomplished everything that depended on human powers; and that no blame attaches to you. But we face now a matter very different from that of the Great Eyrie. The day the government decides to force that secret, everything is ready. We have only to spend some thousands of dollars, and the road will be open."

"That is what I would urge."

"But at present," said Mr. Ward, shaking his head, "it is much more important to place our hands on this fantastic inventor, who so constantly escapes us. That is work for a detective, indeed; a master detective!"

"He has not been heard from again?"

"No; and though there is every reason to believe that he has been, and still continues, beneath the waters of Lake

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Kirdall, it has been impossible to find any trace of him anywhere around there. One would almost fancy he had the power of making himself invisible, this Proteus of a mechanic!"

"It seems likely," said I, "that he will never be seen until he wishes to be."

"True, Strock. And to my mind there is only one way of dealing with him, and that is to offer him such an enormous price that he cannot refuse to sell his invention."

Mr. Ward was right. Indeed, the government had already made the effort to secure speech with this hero of the day, than whom surely no human being has ever better merited the title. The press had widely spread the news, and this extraordinary individual must assuredly know what the government desired of him, and how completely he could name the terms he wished.

"Surely," added Mr. Ward, "this invention can be of no personal use to the man, that he should hide it from the rest of us. There is every reason why he should sell it. Can this unknown be already some dangerous criminal who, thanks to his machine, hopes to defy all pursuit?"

My chief then went on to explain that it had been decided to employ other means in search of the inventor. It was possible after all that he had perished with his machine in some dangerous maneuver. If so, the ruined vehicle might prove almost as valuable and instructive to the mechanical world as the man himself. But since the accident to the schooner *Markel* on Lake Kirdall, no news of him whatever had reached the police.

On this point Mr. Ward did not attempt to hide his disappointment and his anxiety. Anxiety, yes, for it was manifestly becoming more and more difficult for him to fulfill his duty of protecting the public. How could we arrest criminals, if they could flee from justice at such speed over both land and sea? How could we pursue them under the oceans? And when dirigible balloons should also have reached their full perfection, we would even have to chase men through the air! I asked myself if my colleagues and I would not find ourselves some day reduced to utter helplessness? If police officials, become a useless incumbrance, would be definitely discarded by society?

Here, there recurred to me the jesting letter I had re-

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ceived a fortnight before, the letter which threatened my liberty and even my life. I recalled, also, the singular espionage of which I had been the subject. I asked myself if I had better mention these things to Mr. Ward. But they seemed to have absolutely no relation to the matter now in hand. The Great Eyrie affair had been definitely put aside by the government, since an eruption was no longer threatening. And they now wished to employ me upon this newer matter. I waited, then, to mention this letter to my chief at some future time, when it would be not so sore a joke to me.

Mr. Ward again took up our conversation. "We are resolved by some means to establish communication with this inventor. He has disappeared, it is true; but he may reappear at any moment, and in any part of the country. I have chosen you, Strock, to follow him the instant he appears. You must hold yourself ready to leave Washington on the moment. Do not quit your house, except to come here to headquarters each day; notify me, each time by telephone, when you start from home, and report to me personally the moment you arrive here."

"I will follow orders exactly, Mr. Ward," I answered. "But permit me one question. Ought I to act alone, or will it not be better to join with me——?"

"That is what I intend," said the chief, interrupting me. "You are to choose two of our men whom you think the best fitted."

"I will do so, Mr. Ward. And now, if some day or other I stand in the presence of our man, what am I to do with him?"

"Above all things, do not lose sight of him. If there is no other way, arrest him. You shall have a warrant."

"A useful precaution, Mr. Ward. If he started to jump into his automobile and to speed away at the rate we know of, I must stop him at any cost. One cannot argue long with a man making two hundred miles an hour!"

"You must prevent that, Strock. And the arrest made, telegraph me. After that, the matter will be in my hands."

"Count on me, Mr. Ward; at any hour, day or night, I shall be ready to start with my men. I thank you for having entrusted this mission to me. If it succeeds, it will be a great honor——"

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"And of great profit," added my chief, dismissing me.

Returning home, I made all preparations for a trip of indefinite duration. Perhaps my good housekeeper imagined that I planned a return to the Great Eyrie, which she regarded as an ante-chamber of hell itself. She said nothing, but went about her work with a most despairing face. Nevertheless, sure as I was of her discretion, I told her nothing. In this great mission I would confide in no one.

My choice of the two men to accompany me was easily made. They both belonged to my own department, and had many times under my direct command given proofs of their vigor, courage and intelligence. One, John Hart, of Illinois, was a man of thirty years; the other, aged thirty-two, was Nab Walker, of Massachusetts. I could not have had better assistants.

Several days passed, without news, either of the automobile, the boat, or the submarine. There were rumors in plenty; but the police knew them to be false. As to the reckless stories that appeared in the newspapers, they had most of them, no foundation whatever. Even the best journals cannot be trusted to refuse an exciting bit of news on the mere ground of its unreliability.

Then, twice in quick succession, there came what seemed trustworthy reports of the "man of the hour." The first asserted that he had been seen on the roads of Arkansas, near Little Rock. The second, that he was in the very middle of Lake Superior.

Unfortunately, these two notices were absolutely unreconcilable; for while the first gave the afternoon of June twenty-sixth, as the time of appearance, the second set it for the evening of the same day. Now, these two points of the United States territory are not less than eight hundred miles apart. Even granting the automobile this unthinkable speed, greater than any it had yet shown, how could it have crossed all the intervening country unseen? How could it traverse the States of Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa and Wisconsin, from end to end without anyone of our agents giving us warning, without any interested person rushing to a telephone?

After these two momentary appearances, if appearances they were, the machine again dropped out of knowledge.

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Mr. Ward did not think it worth while to dispatch me and my men to either point whence it had been reported.

Yet since this marvelous machine seemed still in existence, something must be done. The following official notice was published in every newspaper of the United States under July 3d. It was couched in the most formal terms.

"During the month of April, of the present year, an automobile traversed the roads of Pennsylvania, of Kentucky, of Ohio, of Tennessee, of Missouri, of Illinois; and, on the twenty-seventh of May, during the race held by the American Automobile Club, it covered the course in Wisconsin. Then it disappeared.

"During the first week of June, a boat maneuvering at great speed appeared off the coast of New England between Cape Cod and Cape Sable, and more particularly around Boston. Then it disappeared.

"In the second fortnight of the same month, a submarine boat was run beneath the waters of Lake Kirdall, in Kansas. Then it disappeared.

"Everything points to the belief that the same inventor must have built these three machines, or perhaps that they are the same machine, constructed so as to travel both on land and water.

"A proposition is therefore addressed to the said inventor, whoever he be, with the aim of acquiring the said machine.

"He is requested to make himself known and to name the terms upon which he will treat with the United States government. He is also requested to answer as promptly as possible to the Department of Federal Police, Washington, D. C., United States of America."

Such was the notice printed in large type on the front page of every newspaper. Surely it could not fail to reach the eye of him for whom it was intended, wherever he might be. He would read it. He could scarce fail to answer it in some manner. And why should he refuse such an unlimited offer? We had only to await his reply.

One can easily imagine how high the public curiosity rose. From morning till night, an eager and noisy crowd pressed about the bureau of police, awaiting the arrival of

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a letter or a telegram. The best reporters were on the spot. What honor, what profit would come to the paper which was first to publish the famous news! To know at last the name and place of the undiscoverable unknown! And to know if he would agree to some bargain with the government! It goes without saying that America does things on a magnificent scale. Millions would not be lacking for the inventor. If necessary all the millionaires in the country would open their inexhaustible purses!

The day passed. To how many excited and impatient people it seemed to contain more than twenty-four hours! And each hour held far more than sixty minutes! There came no answer, no letter, no telegram! The night following, there was still no news. And it was the same the next day—and the next.

There came, however another result, which had been fully foreseen. The cables informed Europe of what the United States government had done. The different Powers of the Old World hoped also to obtain possession of the wonderful invention. Why should they not struggle for an advantage so tremendous? Why should they not enter the contest with their millions?

In brief, every great Power took part in the affair, France, England, Russia, Italy, Austria, Germany. Only the states of the second order refrained from entering, with their smaller resources, upon a useless effort. The European press published notices identical with that of the United States. The extraordinary "chauffeur" had only to speak, to become a rival to the Vanderbilts, the Astors, the Goulds, the Morgans, and the Rothschilds of every country of Europe.

And, when the mysterious inventor made no sign, what attractive offers were held forth to tempt him to discard the secrecy in which he was enwrapped! The whole world became a public market, an auction house whence arose the most amazing bids. Twice a day the newspapers would add up the amounts, and these kept rising from millions to millions. The end came when the United States Congress, after a memorable session, voted to offer the sum of twenty million dollars. And there was not a citizen of the States of whatever rank, who objected to the amount, so much importance was attached to the possession of this

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prodigious engine of locomotion. As for me, I said emphatically to my old housekeeper: "The machine is worth even more than that."

Evidently the other nations of the world did not think so, for their bids remained below the final sum. But how useless was this mighty struggle of the great rivals! The inventor did not appear! He did not exist! He had never existed! It was all a monstrous pretense of the American newspapers. That, at least, became the announced view of the Old World.

And so the time passed. There was no further news of our man, there was no response from him. He appeared no more. For my part, not knowing what to think, I commenced to lose all hope of reaching any solution to the strange affair.

Then on the morning of the fifteenth of July, a letter without postmark was found in the mailbox of the police bureau. After the authorities had studied it, it was given out to the Washington journals, which published it in facsimile, in special numbers. It was couched as follows:

CHAPTER IX

THE SECOND LETTER

"On Board the 'Terror'
"July 15.

"To the Old and New World,

"The propositions emanating from the different governments of Europe, as also that which has finally been made by the United States of America, need expect no other answer than this:

"I refuse absolutely and definitely the sums offered for my invention.

"My machine will be neither French nor German, nor Austrian nor Russian, nor English nor American.

"The invention will remain my own, and I shall use it as pleases me.

"With it, I hold control of the entire world, and there lies no force within the reach of humanity which is able to resist me, under any circumstances whatsoever.

"Let no one attempt to seize or stop me. It is, and will

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be, utterly impossible. Whatever injury anyone attempts against me, I will return a hundredfold.

"As to the money which is offered me, I depise it! I have no need of it. Moreover, on the day when it pleases me to have millions, or billions, I have but to reach out my hand and take them.

"Let both the Old and the New World realize this: They can accomplish nothing against me; I can accomplish anything against them.

"So I sign this letter:

"The Master of the World."

CHAPTER X

OUTSIDE THE LAW

SUCH was the letter addressed to the government of the United States. As to the person who had placed it in the mail-box of the police, no one had seen him.

The sidewalk in front of our offices had probably not been once vacant during the entire night. From sunset to sunrise, there had always been people, busy, anxious, or curious, passing before our door. It is true, however, that even then, the bearer of the letter might easily have slipped by unseen and dropped the letter in the box. The night had been so dark, you could scarcely see from one side of the street to the other.

I have said that this letter appeared in facsimile in all the newspapers to which the government communicated it. Perhaps one would naturally imagine that the first comment of the public would be, "This is the work of some practical joker." It was in that way that I had accepted my letter from the Great Eyrie, five weeks before.

But this was not the general attitude toward the present letter, neither in Washington, nor in the rest of America. To the few who would have maintained that the document should not be taken seriously, an immense majority would have responded. "This letter has not the style nor the spirit of a jester. Only one man could have written it; and that is the inventor of this unapproachable machine."

To most people this conclusion seemed indisputable owing to a curious state of mind easily explainable. For

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all the strange facts of which the key had hitherto been lacking, this letter furnished an explanation. The theory now almost universally accepted was as follows. The inventor had hidden himself for a time, only in order to reappear more startlingly in some new light. Instead of having perished in an accident, he had concealed himself in some retreat where the police were unable to discover him. Then to assert positively his attitude toward all governments he had written this letter. But instead of dropping it in the post in any one locality, which might have resulted in its being traced to him, he had come to Washington and deposited it himself in the very spot suggested by the government's official notice, the bureau of police.

Well! If this remarkable personage had reckoned that this new proof of his existence would make some noise in two worlds, he certainly figured rightly. That day, the millions of good folk who read and re-read their daily paper could—to employ a well-known phrase, scarcely believe their eyes.

As for myself, I studied carefully every phrase of the defiant document. The hand-writing was black and heavy. An expert at chirography would doubtless have distinguished in the lines traces of a violent temperament, of a character stern and unsocial. Suddenly, a cry escaped me —a cry that fortunately my housekeeper did not hear. Why had I not noticed sooner the resemblance of the handwriting to that of the letter I had received from Morganton?

Moreover, a yet more significant coincidence, the initials with which my letter had been signed, did they not stand for the words "Master of the World?"

And whence came the second letter? "On Board the Terror." Doubtless this name was that of the triple machine commanded by the mysterious captain. The initials in my letter were his own signature; and it was he who had threatened me, if I dared to renew my attempt on the Great Eyrie.

I rose and took from my desk the letter of June thirteenth. I compared it with the facsimile in the newspapers. There was no doubt about it. They were both in the same peculiar hand-writing.

My mind worked eagerly. I sought to trace the prob-

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able deductions from this striking fact, known only to myself. The man who had threatened me was the commander of this "Terror"—startling name, only too well justified! I asked myself if our search could not now be prosecuted under less vague conditions. Could we not now start our men upon a trail which would lead definitely to success? In short, what relation existed between the "Terror" and the Great Eyrie? What connection was there between the phenomena of the Blueridge Mountains, and the no less phenomenal performances of the fantastic machine?

I knew what my first step should be; and with the letter in my pocket, I hastened to police headquarters. Inquiring if Mr. Ward was within and receiving an affirmative reply, I hastened toward his door, and rapped upon it with unusual and perhaps unnecessary vigor. Upon his call to enter, I stepped eagerly into the room.

The chief had spread before him the letter published in the papers, not a facsimile, but the original itself which had been deposited in the letter-box of the department.

"You come as if you had important news, Strock?"

"Judge for yourself, Mr. Ward;" and I drew from my pocket the letter with the initials.

Mr. Ward took it, glanced at its face, and asked, "What is this?"

"A letter signed only with initials, as you can see."

"And where was it posted?"

"In Morganton, in North Carolina."

"When did you receive it?"

"A month ago, the thirteenth of June."

"What did you think of it then?"

"That it had been written as a joke."

"And—now—Strock?"

"I think, what you will think, Mr. Ward, after you have studied it."

My chief turned to the letter again and read it carefully. "It is signed with three initials," said he.

"Yes, Mr. Ward, and those initials belong to the words, 'Master of the World,' in this facsimile."

"Of which this is the original," responded Mr. Ward, taking it up.

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"It is quite evident," I urged, "that the two letters are by the same hand."

"It seems so."

"You see what threats are made against me, to protect the Great Eyrie."

"Yes, the threat of death! But Strock, you have had this letter for a month. Why have you not shown it to me before?"

"Because I attached no importance to it. To-day, after the letter from the 'Terror,' it must be taken seriously."

"I agree with you. It appears to me most important. I even hope it may prove the means of tracking this strange personage."

"That is what I also hope, Mr. Ward."

"Only—what connection can possibly exist between the 'Terror' and the Great Eyrie?"

"That I do not know. I cannot even imagine——"

"There can be but one explanation," continued Mr. Ward, "though it is almost inadmissible, even impossible."

"And that is?"

"That the Great Eyrie was the spot selected by the inventor, where he gathered his material."

"That is impossible!" cried I. "In what way would he get his material in there? And how get his machine out? After what I have seen, Mr. Ward, your suggestion is impossible."

"Unless, Strock——"

"Unless what?" I demanded.

"Unless the machine of this Master of the World has also wings, which permit it to take refuge in the Great Eyrie."

At the suggestion that the "Terror," which had searched the deeps of the sea, might be capable also of rivaling the vultures and the eagles, I could not restrain an expressive shrug of incredulity. Neither did Mr. Ward himself dwell upon the extravagant hypothesis.

He took the two letters and compared them afresh. He examined them under a microscope, especially the signatures, and established their perfect identity. Not only the same hand, but the same pen had written them.

After some moments of further reflection, Mr. Ward

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said, "I will keep your letter, Strock. Decidedly, I think, that you are fated to play an important part in this strange affair—or rather in these two affairs. What thread attaches them, I cannot yet see; but I am sure the thread exists. You have been connected with the first, and it will not be surprising if you have a large part in the second."

"I hope so, Mr. Ward. You know how inquisitive I am."

"I do, Strock. That is understood. Now, I can only repeat my former order; hold yourself in readiness to leave Washington at a moment's warning."

All that day, the public excitement caused by the defiant letter mounted steadily higher. It was felt both at the White House and at the Capitol that public opinion absolutely demanded some action. Of course, it was difficult to do anything. Where could one find this Master of the World? And even if he were discovered, how could he be captured? He had at his disposal not only the powers he had displayed, but apparently still greater resources as yet unknown. How had he been able to reach Lake Kirdall over the rocks; and how had he escaped from it? Then, if he had indeed appeared on Lake Superior, how had he covered all the intervening territory unseen?

What a bewildering affair it was altogether! This, of course, made it all the more important to get to the bottom of it. Since the millions of dollars had been refused, force must be employed. The inventor and his invention were not to be bought. And in what haughty and menacing terms he had couched his refusal! So be it! He must be treated as an enemy of society, against whom all means became justified, that he might be deprived of his power to injure others. The idea that he had perished was now entirely discarded. He was alive, very much alive; and his existence constituted a perpetual public danger!

Influenced by these ideas, the government issued the following proclamation:

"Since the commander of the 'Terror' has refused to make public his invention, at any price whatever, since the use which he makes of his machine constitutes a public menace, against which it is impossible to guard, the said commander of the 'Terror' is hereby placed beyond the protection of the law. Any measures taken in the effort to

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capture or destroy either him or his machine will be approved and rewarded."

It was a declaration of war, war to the death against this "Master of the World" who thought to threaten and defy an entire nation, the American nation!

Before the day was over, various rewards of large amounts were promised to anyone who revealed the hiding place of this dangerous inventor, to anyone who could identify him, and to anyone who should rid the country of him.

Such was the situation during the last fortnight of July. All was left to the hazard of fortune. The moment the outlaw re-appeared he would be seen and signaled, and when the chance came he would be arrested. This could not be accomplished when he was in his automobile on land or in his boat on the water. No; he must be seized suddenly, before he had any opportunity to escape by means of that speed which no other machine could equal.

I was therefore all alert, awaiting an order from Mr. Ward to start out with my men. But the order did not arrive for the very good reason that the man whom it concerned remained undiscovered. The end of July approached. The newspapers continued the excitement. They published repeated rumors. New clues were constantly being announced. But all this was mere idle talk. Telegrams reached the police bureau from every part of America, each contradicting and nullifying the others. The enormous rewards offered could not help but lead to accusations, errors, and blunders, made, many of them, in good faith. One time it would be a cloud of dust, which must have contained the automobile. At another time, almost any wave on any of America's thousand lakes represented the submarine. In truth, in the excited state of the public imagination, apparitions assailed us from every side.

At last, on the twenty-ninth of July, I received a telephone message to come to Mr. Ward on the instant. Twenty minutes later I was in his cabinet.

"You leave in an hour, Strock," said he.

"Where for?"

"For Toledo."

"It has been seen?"

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"Yes. At Toledo you will get your final orders."
"In an hour, my men and I will be on the way."
"Good! And, Strock, I now give you a formal order."
"What is it, Mr. Ward?"
"To succeed—this time to succeed!"

CHAPTER XI
THE CAMPAIGN

So the undiscoverable commander had reappeared upon the territory of the United States! He had never shown himself in Europe either on the roads or in the seas. He had not crossed the Atlantic, which apparently he could have traversed in three days. Did he then intend to make only America the scene of his exploits? Ought we to conclude from this that he was an American?

Let me insist upon this point. It seemed clear that the submarine might easily have crossed the vast sea which separates the New and the Old World. Not only would its amazing speed have made its voyage short, in comparison to that of the swiftest steamship, but also it would have escaped all the storms that make the voyage dangerous. Tempests did not exist for it. It had but to abandon the surface of the waves, and it could find absolute calm a few score feet beneath.

But the inventor had not crossed the Atlantic, and if he were to be captured now, it would probably be in Ohio, since Toledo is a city of that state.

This time the fact of the machine's appearance had been kept secret, between the police and the agent who had warned them, and whom I was hurrying to meet. No journal—and many would have paid high for the chance—was printing this news. We had decided that nothing should be revealed until our effort was at an end. No indiscretion would be committed by either my comrades or myself.

The man to whom I was sent with an order from Mr. Ward was named Arthur Wells. He awaited us at Toledo. The city of Toledo stands at the western end of Lake Erie. Our train sped during the night across West Virginia and Ohio. There was no delay; and before noon

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the next day the locomotive stopped in the Toledo depot.

John Hart, Nab Walker and I stepped out with traveling bags in our hands, and revolvers in our pockets. Perhaps we should need weapons for an attack, or even to defend ourselves. Scarcely had I stepped from the train when I picked out the man who awaited us. He was scanning the arriving passengers impatiently, evidently as eager and full of haste as I.

I approached him. "Mr. Wells?" said I.

"Mr. Strock?" asked he.

"Yes."

"I am at your command," said Mr. Wells.

"Are we to stop any time in Toledo?" I asked.

"No; with your permission, Mr. Strock. A carriage with two good horses is waiting outside the station; and we must leave at once to reach our destination as soon as possible."

"We will go at once," I answered, signing to my two men to follow us. "Is it far?"

"Twenty miles."

"And the place is called?"

"Black Rock Creek."

Having left our bags at a hotel, we started on our drive. Much to my surprise I found there were provisions sufficient for several days packed beneath the seat of the carriage. Mr. Wells told me that the region around Black Rock Creek was among the wildest in the state. There was nothing there to attract either farmers or fishermen. We would find not an inn for our meals nor a room in which to sleep. Fortunately, during the July heat there would be no hardship even if we had to lie one or two nights under the stars.

More probably, however, if we were successful, the matter would not occupy us many hours. Either the commander of the "Terror" would be surprised before he had a chance to escape, or he would take to flight and we must give up all hope of arresting him.

I found Arthur Wells to be a man of about forty, large and powerful. I knew him by reputation to be one of the best of our local police agents. Cool in danger and enterprising always, he had proven his daring on more than one occasion at the peril of his life. He had been in Toledo on

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a wholly different mission, when chance had thrown him on the track of the "Terror."

We drove rapidly along the shore of Lake Erie, toward the southwest. This inland sea of water is on the northern boundary of the United States, lying between Canada on one side and the States of Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York on the other. If I stop to mention the geographical position of this lake, its depth, its extent, and the waters nearest around, it is because the knowledge is necessary for the understanding of the events which were about to happen.

The surface of Lake Erie covers about ten thousand square miles. It is nearly six hundred feet above sea level. It is joined on the northwest, by means of the Detroit River, with the still greater lakes to the westward, and receives their waters. It has also rivers of its own though of less importance, such as the Rocky, the Cuyahoga, and the Black. The lake empties at its northeastern end into Lake Ontario by means of Niagara River and its celebrated falls.

The greatest known depth of Lake Erie is over one hundred and thirty feet. Hence it will be seen that the mass of its waters is considerable. In short, this is a region of most magnificent lakes. The land, though not situated far northward, is exposed to the full sweep of the Arctic cold. The region to the northward is low, and the winds of winter rush down with extreme violence. Hence Lake Erie is sometimes frozen over from shore to shore.

The principal cities on the borders of this great lake are Buffalo at the east, which belongs to New York State, and Toledo in Ohio, at the west, with Cleveland and Sandusky, both Ohio cities, at the south. Smaller towns and villages are numerous along the shore. The traffic is naturally large, its annual value being estimated at considerably over two million dollars.

Our carriage followed a rough and little used road along the borders of the lake; and as we toiled along, Arthur Wells told me, what he had learned.

Less than two days before, on the afternoon of July twenty-seventh, Wells had been riding on horseback toward the town of Herly. Five miles outside the town, he was riding through a little wood, when he saw, far up across the lake, a submarine which rose suddenly above the waves. He stopped, tied his horse, and stole on foot to the edge of

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the lake. There, from behind a tree he had seen—with his own eyes seen—this submarine advance toward him, and stop at the mouth of Black Rock Creek. Was it the famous machine for which the whole world was seeking, which thus came directly to his feet?

When the submarine was close to the rocks, two men climbed out upon its deck and stepped ashore. Was one of them this Master of the World, who had not been seen since he was reported from Lake Superior? Was this the mysterious "Terror" which had thus risen from the depths of Lake Erie?

"I was alone," said Wells. "Alone on the edge of the Creek. If you and your assistants, Mr. Strock had been there, we four against two, we would have been able to reach these men and seize them before they could have regained their boat and fled."

"Probably," I answered. "But were there no others on the boat with them? Still, if we had seized the two, we could at least have learned who they were."

"And above all," added Wells, "if one of them turned out to be the captain of the Terror!"

"I have only one fear, Wells; this submarine, whether it is the one we seek or another, may have left the creek since your departure."

"We shall know about that in a few hours, now. Pray Heaven they are still there! Then when night comes——"

"But," I asked, "did you remain watching in the wood until night?"

"No; I left after an hour's watching, and rode straight for the telegraph station at Toledo. I reached there late at night and sent immediate word to Washington."

"That was night before last. Did you return yesterday to Black Rock Creek?"

"Yes."

"The submarine was still there?"

"In the same spot."

"And the two men?"

"The same two men. I judge that some accident had happened, and they came to this lonely spot to repair it."

"Probably so," said I. "Some damage which made it impossible for them to regain their usual hiding-place. If only they are still here!"

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"I have reason to believe they will be, for quite a lot of stuff was taken out of the boat, and laid about upon the shore; and as well as I could discern from a distance they seemed to be working on board."

"Only the two men?"

"Only the two."

"But," protested I, "can two be sufficient to handle an apparatus of such speed, and of such intricacy, as to be at once automobile, boat and submarine?"

"I think not, Mr. Strock; but I only saw the same two. Several times they came to the edge of the little wood where I was hidden, and gathered sticks for a fire which they made upon the beach. The region is so uninhabited and the creek so hidden from the lake that they ran little danger of discovery. They seemed to know this."

"You would recognize them both again?"

"Perfectly. One was of middle size, vigorous, and quick of movement, heavily bearded. The other was smaller, but stocky and strong. Yesterday, as before, I left the wood about five o'clock and hurried back to Toledo. There I found a telegram from Mr. Ward, notifying me of your coming; and I awaited you at the station."

Summed up, then, the news amounted to this: For forty hours past a submarine, presumably the one we sought, had been hidden in Black Rock Creek, engaged in repairs. Probably these were absolutely necessary, and we should find the boat still there. As to how the "Terror" came to be in Lake Erie, Arthur Wells and I discussed that, and agreed that it was a very probable place for her. The last time she had been seen was on Lake Superior. From there to Lake Erie the machine could have come by the roads of Michigan, but since no one had remarked its passage and as both the police and the people were specially aroused and active in that portion of the country, it seemed more probable, that the Terror had come by water. There was a clear route through the chain of the Great Lakes and their rivers, by which in her character of a submarine she could easily proceed undiscovered.

And now, if the Terror had already left the creek, or if she escaped when we attempted to seize her, in what direction would she turn? In any case, there was little chance of following her. There were two torpedo-destroyers at

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the port of Buffalo, at the other extremity of Lake Erie.* Before I left Washington Mr. Ward had informed me of their presence; and a telegram to their commanders would, if there were need, start them in pursuit of the Terror. But despite their splendid speed, how could they vie with her! And if she plunged beneath the waters, they would be helpless. Moreover Arthur Wells averred that in case of a battle, the advantage would not be with the destroyers, despite their large crews, and many guns. Hence, if we did not succeed this night, the campaign would end in failure.

Arthur Wells knew Black Rock Creek thoroughly, having hunted there more than once. It was bordered in most places with sharp rocks against which the waters of the lake beat heavily. Its channel was some thirty feet deep, so that the Terror could take shelter either upon the surface or under water. In two or three places the steep banks gave way to sand beaches which led to little gorges reaching up toward the woods, two or three hundred feet.

It was seven in the evening when our carriage reached these woods. There was still daylight enough for us to see easily, even in the shade of the trees. To have crossed openly to the edge of the creek would have exposed us to the view of the men of the Terror, if she were still there, and thus give her warning to escape.

"Had we better stop here?" I asked Wells, as our rig drew up to the edge of the woods.

"No, Mr. Strock," said he. "We had better leave the carriage deeper in the woods, where there will be no chance whatever of our being seen."

"Can the carriage drive under these trees?"

"It can," declared Wells. "I have already explored these woods thoroughly. Five or six hundred feet from here, there is a little clearing, where we will be completely hidden, and where our horses may find pasture. Then, as soon as it is dark, we will go down to the beach, at the edge of the rocks which shut in the mouth of the creek. Thus if the Terror is still there, we shall stand between her and escape."

Eager as we all were for action, it was evidently best to

*By treaty between the United States and Canada, there are no vessels of war whatever on the Great Lakes. These might, however, have been little launches belonging to the customs service.

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do as Wells suggested and wait for night. The intervening time could well be occupied as he said. Leading the horses by the bridle, while they dragged the empty carriage, we proceeded through the heavy woods. The tall pines, the stalwart oaks, the cypress scattered here and there, made the evening darker overhead. Beneath our feet spread a carpet of scattered herbs, pine needles and dead leaves. Such was the thickness of the upper foliage that the last rays of the setting sun could no longer penetrate here. We had to feel our way; and it was not without some knocks that the carriage reached the clearing ten minutes later.

This clearing, surrounded by great trees, formed a sort of oval, covered with rich grass. Here it was still daylight, and the darkness would scarcely deepen for over an hour. There was thus time to arrange an encampment and to rest awhile after our hard trip over the rough and rocky roads.

Of course, we were intensely eager to approach the Creek and see if the Terror was still there. But prudence restrained us. A little patience, and the night would enable us to reach a commanding position unsuspected. Wells urged this strongly; and despite my eagerness, I felt that he was right.

The horses were unharnessed, and left to browse under the care of the coachman who had driven us. The provisions were unpacked, and John Hart and Nab Walker spread out a meal on the grass at the foot of a superb cypress which recalled to me the forest odors of Morganton and Pleasant Garden. We were hungry and thirsty; and food and drink were not lacking. Then our pipes were lighted to calm the anxious moments of waiting that remained.

Silence reigned within the wood. The last song of the birds had ceased. With the coming of night the breeze fell little by little, and the leaves scarcely quivered even at the tops of the highest branches. The sky darkened rapidly after sundown and twilight deepened into obscurity.

I looked at my watch, it was half-past eight. "It is time, Wells."

"When you will, Mr. Strock."

"Then let us start."

We cautioned the coachman not to let the horses stray beyond the clearing. Then we started. Wells went in ad-

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vance, I followed him, and John Hart and Nab Walker came behind. In the darkness, we three would have been helpless without the guidance of Wells. Soon we reached the farther border of the woods; and before us stretched the banks of Black Rock Creek.

All was silent; all seemed deserted. We could advance without risk. If the Terror was there, she had cast anchor behind the rocks. But was she there? That was the momentous question! As we approached the dénouement of this exciting affair, my heart was in my throat.

Wells motioned to us to advance. The sand of the shore crunched beneath our steps. The two hundred feet between us and the mouth of the Creek were crossed softly, and a few minutes sufficed to bring us to the rocks at the edge of the lake.

There was nothing! Nothing!

The spot where Wells had left the Terror twenty-four hours before was empty. The "Master of the World" was no longer at Black Rock Creek.

CHAPTER XII

BLACK ROCK CREEK

HUMAN nature is prone to illusions. Of course, there had been all along a probability that the Terror had deserted the locality, even admitting that it was she Wells had seen the previous day. If some damage to her triple system of locomotion had prevented her from regaining either by land or by water her usual hiding-place, and obliged her to seek refuge in Black Rock Creek, what ought we to conclude now upon finding her here no longer? Obviously, that, having finished her repairs, she had continued on her way, and was already far beyond the waters of Lake Erie.

But probable as this result had been from the first, we had more and more ignored it as our trip proceeded. We had come to accept as a fact that we should meet the Terror, that we should find her anchored at the base of the rocks where Wells had seen her.

And now what disappointment! I might even say, what despair! All our efforts gone for nothing! Even if the Terror was still upon the lake, to find her, reach her

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and capture her, was beyond our power, and—it might as well be fully recognized—beyond all human power.

We stood there, Wells and I, completely crushed, while John Hart and Nab Walker, no less chagrined, went tramping along the banks of the Creek, seeking any trace that had been left behind.

Posted there, at the mouth of the Creek, Wells and I exchanged scarcely a word. What need was there of words to enable us to understand each other! After our eagerness and our despair, we were now exhausted. Defeated in our well-planned attempt, we felt as unwilling to abandon our campaign, as we were unable to continue it.

Nearly an hour slipped by. We could not resolve to leave the place. Our eyes still sought to pierce the night. Sometimes a glimmer, due to the sparkle of the waters, trembled on the surface of the lake. Then it vanished, and with it the foolish hope that it had roused. Sometimes again, we thought we saw a shadow outlined against the dark, the silhouette of an approaching boat. Yet again some eddies would swirl up at our feet, as if the Creek had been stirred within its depths. These vain imaginings were dissipated one after the other. They were but the illusions raised by our strained fancies.

At length our companions rejoined us. My first question was, "Nothing new?"

"Nothing," said John Hart.

"You have explored both banks of the Creek?"

"Yes," responded Nab Walker, "as far as the shallow water above; and we have not seen even a vestige of the things which Mr. Wells saw laid on the shore."

"Let us wait awhile," said I, unable to resolve upon a return to the woods.

At that moment our attention was caught by a sudden agitation of the waters, which swelled upward at the foot of the rocks.

"It is like the swell from a vessel," said Wells.

"Yes," said I, instinctively lowering my voice. "What has caused it? The wind has completely died out. Does it come from something on the surface of the lake?"

"Or from something underneath," said Wells, bending forward, the better to determine.

The commotion certainly seemed as if caused by some

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boat, whether from beneath the water, or approaching the creek from outside upon the lake.

Silent, motionless, we strained eyes and ears to pierce the profound obscurity. The faint noise of the waves of the lake lapping on the shore beyond the creek, came to us distinctly through the night. John Hart and Nab Walker drew a little aside upon a higher ridge of rocks. As for me, I leaned close to the water to watch the agitation. It did not lessen. On the contrary it became momentarily more evident, and I began to distinguish a sort of regular throbbing, like that produced by a screw in motion.

"There is no doubt," declared Wells, leaning close to me, "there is a boat coming toward us."

"There certainly is," responded I, "unless they have whales or sharks in Lake Erie."

"No, it is a boat," repeated Wells. "Is she headed toward the mouth of the creek, or is she going further up it?"

"This is just where you saw the boat twice before?"

"Yes, just here."

"Then if this is the same one, and it can be no other, she will probably return to the same spot."

"There!" whispered Wells, extending his hand toward the entrance of the creek.

Our companions rejoined us, and all four, crouching low upon the bank, peered in the direction he pointed.

We vaguely distinguished a black mass moving through the darkness. It advanced very slowly and was still outside the creek, upon the lake, perhaps a cable's length to the northeast. We could scarcely hear even now the faint throbbing of its engines. Perhaps they had stopped and the boat was only gliding forward under their previous impulse.

It seemed, then, that this was indeed the submarine which Wells had watched, and it was returning to pass this night, like the last, within the shelter of the creek.

Why had it left the anchorage, if only to return? Had it suffered some new disaster, which again impaired its power? Or had it been before compelled to leave, with its repairs still unfinished? What cause constrained it to return here? Was there some imperious reason why it could no longer be turned into an automobile, and go darting away across the roads of Ohio?

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To all these questions which came crowding upon me, I could give no answer. Furthermore both Wells and I kept reasoning under the assumption that this was really the Terror commanded by the "Master of the World" who had dated from it his letter of defiance to the government. Yet this premise was still unproven, no matter how confident we might feel of it.

Whatever boat this was, that stole so softly through the night, it continued to approach us. Assuredly its captain must know perfectly the channels and shores of Black Rock Creek, since he ventured here in such darkness. Not a light showed upon the deck. Not a single ray from within the cabin glimmered through any crevice.

A moment later, we heard some machinery moving very softly. The swell of the eddies grew stronger, and in a few moments the boat touched the "quay."

This word "quay," only used in that region, exactly describes the spot. The rocks at our feet formed a level, five or six feet above the water, and descending to it perpendicularly, exactly like a landing wharf.

"We must not stop here," whispered Wells, seizing me by the arm.

"No," I answered, "they might see us. We must lie crouched upon the beach! Or we might hide in some crevice of the rocks."

"We will follow you."

There was not a moment to lose. The dark mass was now close at hand, and on its deck, but slightly raised above the surface of the water, we could trace the silhouettes of two men.

Were there, then, really only two on board?

We stole softly back to where the ravines rose toward the woods above. Several niches in the rocks were at hand. Wells and I crouched down in one, my two assistants in another. If the men on the Terror landed, they could not see us; but we could see them, and would be able to act as opportunity offered.

There were some slight noises from the boat, a few words exchanged in our own language. It was evident that the vessel was preparing to anchor. Then almost instantly, a rope was thrown out, exactly on the point of the quay where we had stood.

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Leaning forward, Wells could discern that the rope was seized by one of the mariners, who had leaped ashore. Then we heard a grappling-iron scrape along the ground.

Some moments later, steps crunched upon the sand. Two men came up the ravine, and went onward toward the edge of the woods, guiding their steps by a ship lantern.

Where were they going? Was Black Rock Creek a regular hiding place of the Terror? Had her commander a depot here for stores or provisions? Did they come here to restock their craft, when the whim of their wild voyaging brought them to this part of the continent? Did they know this deserted, uninhabited spot so well, that they had no fear of ever being discovered here?

"What shall we do?" whispered Wells.

"Wait till they return, and then——" My words were cut short by a surprise. The men were not thirty feet from us, when, one of them chancing to turn suddenly, the light of their lantern fell full upon his face.

He was one of the two men who had watched before my house in Long Street. I could not be mistaken. I recognized him as positively as my old servant had done. It was he; it was assuredly one of the spies of whom I had never been able to find any further traces! There was no longer any doubt, my warning letter had come from them. It was therefore from the "Master of the World"; it had been written from the Terror; and this was the Terror. Once more I asked myself what could be the connection between this machine and the Great Eyrie!

In whispered words, I told Wells of my discovery. His only comment was, "It is all incomprehensible!"

Meanwhile the two men had continued on their way to the woods, and were gathering sticks beneath the trees. "What if they discover our encampment?" murmured Wells.

"No danger, if they do not go beyond the nearest trees."

"But if they do discover it?"

"They will hurry back to their boat, and we shall be able to cut off their retreat."

Toward the creek, where their craft lay, there was no further sound. I left my hiding-place; I descended the ravine to the quay; I stood on the very spot where the grappling-iron was fast among the rocks.

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The Terror lay there, quiet at the end of its cable. Not a light was on board; not a person visible, either on the deck, or on the bank. Was not this my opportunity? Should I leap on board and there await the return of the two men?

"Mr. Strock!" It was Wells, who called to me softly from close at hand.

I drew back in all haste and crouched down beside him. Was it too late to take possession of the boat? Or would the attempt perhaps result in disaster from the presence of others watching on board?

At any rate, the two men with the lantern were close at hand returning down the ravine. Plainly they suspected nothing. Each carrying a bundle of wood, they came forward and stopped upon the quay.

Then one of them raised his voice, though not loudly. "Hullo! Captain!"

"All right," answered a voice from the boat.

Wells murmured in my ear, "There are three!"

"Perhaps four," I answered, "perhaps five or six!"

The situation grew more complicated. Against a crew so numerous, what ought we to do? The least imprudence might cost us dear! Now that the two men had returned, would they re-embark with their fagots? Then would the boat leave the creek, or would it remain anchored until day? If it withdrew, would it not be lost to us? It could leave the waters of Lake Erie, and cross any of the neighboring states by land; or it could retrace its road by the Detroit River which would lead it to Lake Huron and the Great Lakes above. Would such an opportunity as this, in the narrow waters of Black Rock Creek, ever occur again!

"At least," said I to Wells, "we are four. They do not expect attack; they will be surprised. The result is in the hands of Providence."

I was about to call our two men, when Wells again seized my arm. "Listen!" said he.

One of the men hailed the boat, and it drew close up to the rocks. We heard the Captain say to the two men ashore, "Everything is all right, up there?"

"Everything, Captain."

"There are still two bundles of wood left there?"

"Two."

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"Then one more trip will bring them all on board the Terror."

The Terror! It was she!

"Yes; just one more trip," answered one of the men.

"Good; then we will start off again at daybreak."

Were there then but three of them on board? The Captain, this Master of the World, and these two men?

Evidently they planned to take aboard the last of their wood. Then they would withdraw within their machine, and go to sleep. Would not that be the time to surprise them, before they could defend themselves?

Rather than to attempt to reach and capture the ship in face of this resolute Captain who was guarding it, Wells and I agreed that it was better to let his men return unassailed, and wait till they were all asleep.

It was now half an hour after ten. Steps were once more heard upon the shore. The man with a lantern and his companion, again remounted the ravine toward the woods. When they were safely beyond hearing, Wells went to warn our men, while I stole forward again to the very edge of the water.

The Terror lay at the end of a short cable. As well as I could judge, she was long and slim, shaped like a spindle, without chimney, without masts, without rigging, such a shape as had been described when she was seen on the coast of New England.

I returned to my place, with my men in the shelter of the ravine; and we looked to our revolvers, which might well prove of service.

Five minutes had passed since the men reached the woods, and we expected their return at any moment. After that, we must wait at least an hour before we made our attack; so that both the Captain and his comrades might be deep in sleep. It was important that they should have not a moment either to send their craft darting out upon the waters of Lake Erie, or to plunge it beneath the waves where we would have been entrapped with it.

In all my career I have never felt such impatience. It seemed to me that the two men must have been detained in the woods. Something had barred their return.

Suddenly a loud noise was heard, the tumult of run-away horses, galloping furiously along the shore!

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They were our own, which, frightened, and perhaps neglected by the driver, had broken away from the clearing, and now came rushing along the bank.

At the same moment, the two men reappeared, and this time they were running with all speed. Doubtless they had discovered our encampment, and had at once suspected that there were police hidden in the woods. They realized that they were watched, they were followed, they would be seized. So they dashed recklessly down the ravine, and after loosening the cable, they would doubtless endeavor to leap aboard. The Terror would disappear with the speed of a meteor, and our attempt would be wholly defeated!

"Forward," I cried. And we scrambled down the sides of the ravine to cut off the retreat of the two men.

They saw us and, on the instant, throwing down their bundles, fired at us with revolvers, hitting John Hart in the leg.

We fired in our turn, but less successfully. The men neither fell nor faltered in their course. Reaching the edge of the creek, without stopping to unloose the cable, they plunged overboard, and in a moment were clinging to the deck of the Terror.

Their captain, springing forward, revolver in hand, fired. The ball grazed Wells.

Nab Walker and I seizing the cable, pulled the black mass of the boat toward shore. Could they cut the rope in time to escape us?

Suddenly the grappling-iron was torn violently from the rocks. One of its hooks caught in my belt, while Walker was knocked down by the flying cable. I was entangled by the iron and the rope and dragged forward——

The Terror, driven by all the power of her engines, made a single bound and darted out across Black Rock Creek.

CHAPTER XIII

ON BOARD THE TERROR

WHEN I came to my senses it was daylight. A half light pierced the thick glass port-hole of the narrow cabin wherein someone had placed me—how many hours ago, I could not

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say! Yet it seemed to me by the slanting rays, that the sun could not be very far above the horizon.

I was resting in a narrow bunk with coverings over me. My clothes, hanging in a corner, had been dried. My belt, torn in half by the hook of the iron, lay on the floor.

I felt no wound nor injury, only a little weakness. If I had lost consciousness, I was sure it had not been from a blow. My head must have been drawn beneath the water, when I was tangled in the cable. I should have been suffocated, if someone had not dragged me from the lake.

Now, was I on board the Terror? And was I alone with the Captain and his two men? This seemed probable, almost certain. The whole scene of our encounter rose before my eyes, Hart lying wounded upon the bank; Wells firing shot after shot, Walker hurled down at the instant when the grappling hook caught my belt! And my companions? On their side, must not they think that I had perished in the waters of Lake Erie?

Where was the Terror now, and how was it navigating? Was it moving as an automobile? Speeding across the roads of some neighboring State? If so, and if I had been unconscious for many hours, the machine with its tremendous powers must be already far away. Or, on the other hand, were we, as a submarine, following some course beneath the lake?

No, the Terror was moving upon some broad liquid surface. The sunlight, penetrating my cabin, showed that the window was not submerged. On the other hand, I felt none of the jolting that the automobile must have suffered even on the smoothest highway. Hence the Terror was not traveling upon land.

As to deciding whether she was still traversing Lake Erie, that was another matter. Had not the Captain reascended the Detroit River, and entered Lake Huron, or even Lake Superior beyond? It was difficult to say.

At any rate I decided to go up on deck. From there I might be able to judge. Dragging myself somewhat heavily from the bunk, I reached for my clothes and dressed, though without much energy. Was I not probably locked within this cabin?

The only exit seemed by a ladder and hatchway above my head. The hatch rose readily to my hand, and I ascended half way on deck.

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My first care was to look forward, backward, and on both sides of the speeding Terror. Everywhere a vast expanse of waves! Not a shore in sight! Nothing but the horizon formed by sea and sky!

Whether it was a lake or the ocean I could easily settle. As we shot forward at such speed the water cut by the bow, rose furiously upward on either side, and the spray lashed savagely against me.

I tasted it. It was fresh water, and very probably that of Lake Erie. The sun was but midway toward the zenith, so it could scarcely be more than seven or eight hours since the moment when the Terror had darted from Black Rock Creek.

This must therefore be the following morning, that of the thirty-first of July.

Considering that Lake Erie is two hundred and twenty miles long, and over fifty wide, there was no reason to be surprised that I could see no land, neither that of the United States to the southeast nor of Canada to the northwest.

At this moment there were two men on the deck, one being at the bow on the look-out, the other in the stern, keeping the course to the northeast, as I judged by the position of the sun. The one at the bow was he whom I had recognized as he ascended the ravine at Black Rock. The second was his companion who had carried the lantern. I looked in vain for the one whom they had called Captain. He was not in sight.

It will be readily appreciated how eager was my desire to stand in the presence of the creator of this prodigious machine, of this fantastic personage who occupied and preoccupied the attention of all the world, the daring inventor who did not fear to engage in battle against the entire human race, and who proclaimed himself "Master of the World."

I approached the man on the look-out, and after a minute of silence I asked him, "Where is the Captain?"

He looked at me through half-closed eyes. He seemed not to understand me. Yet I knew, having heard him the night before, that he spoke English. Moreover, I noticed that he did not appear surprised to see me out of my cabin. Turning his back upon me, he continued to search the horizon.

I stepped then toward the stern, determined to ask the

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same question about the Captain. But when I approached the steersman, he waved me away with his hand, and I obtained no other response.

It only remained for me to study this craft, from which we had been repelled with revolver shots, when we had seized upon its anchor rope.

I therefore set leisurely to work to examine the construction of this machine, which was carrying me—whither? The deck and the upper works were all made of some metal which I did not recognize. In the center of the deck, a scuttle half raised covered the room where the engines were working regularly and almost silently. As I had seen before, neither masts, nor rigging! Not even a flagstaff at the stern! Toward the bow there arose the top of a periscope by which the Terror could be guided when beneath the water.

On the sides were folded back two sort of outshoots resembling the gangways on certain Dutch boats. Of these I could not understand the use.

In the bow there rose a third hatch-way which presumably covered the quarters occupied by the two men when the Terror was at rest.

At the stern a similar hatch gave access probably to the cabin of the captain, who remained unseen. When these different hatches were shut down, they had a sort of rubber covering which closed them hermetically tight, so that the water could not reach the interior when the boat plunged beneath the ocean.

As to the motor, which imparted such prodigious speed to the machine, I could see nothing of it, nor of the propeller. However, the fast speeding boat left behind it only a long, smooth wake. The extreme fineness of the lines of the craft, caused it to make scarcely any waves, and enabled it to ride lightly over the crest of the billows even in a rough sea.

As was already known, the power by which the machine was driven, was neither steam nor gasoline, nor any of those similar liquids so well known by their odor, which are usually employed for automobiles and submarines. No doubt the power here used was electricity, generated on board, at some high power. Naturally I asked myself whence comes this electricity, from piles, or from accumu-

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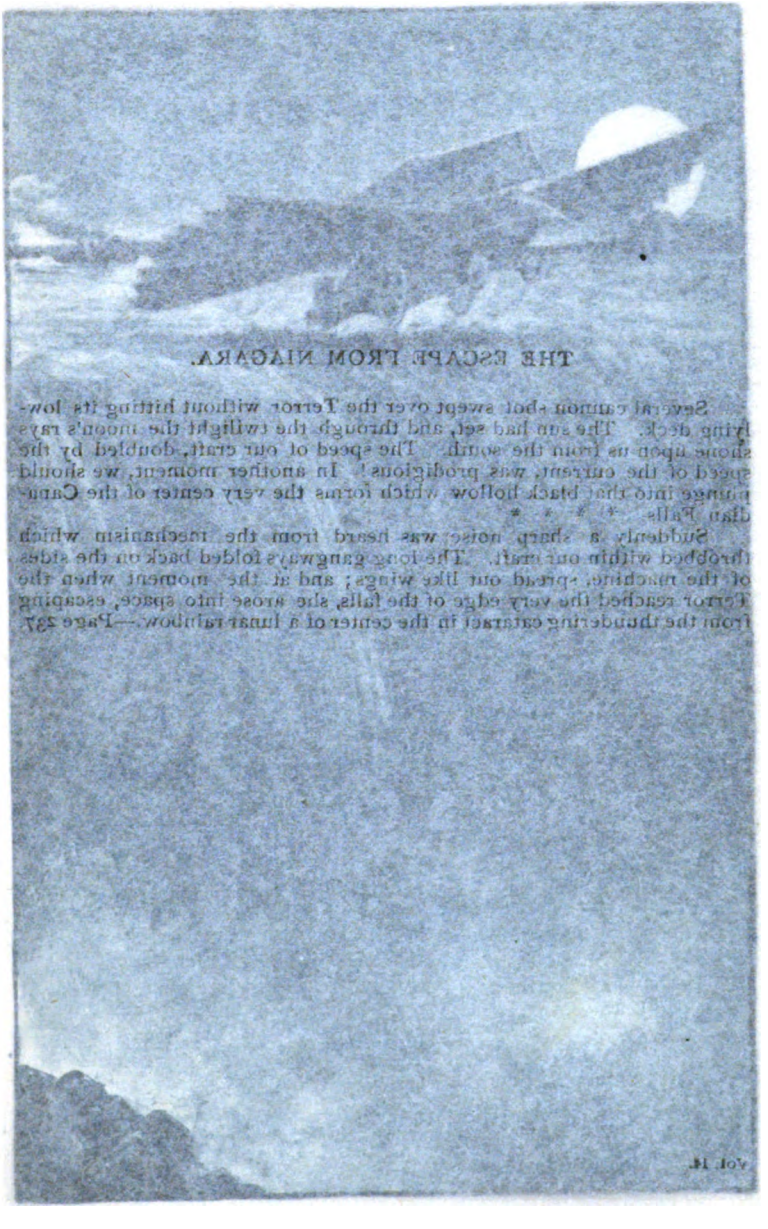

THE ESCAPE FROM NIAGARA.

Several cannon shot swept over the Terror without hitting its low-
lying deck. The sun had set, and through the twilight the moon's rays
shone upon us from the south. The speed of our craft, doubled by the
speed of the current, was prodigious! In another moment, we should
plunge into that black hollow which forms the very center of the Cana-
dian Falls. * * * *

Suddenly a sharp noise was heard from the mechanism which
throbbed within our craft. The long gangways folded back on the sides
of the machine, spread out like wings; and at the moment when the
Terror reached the very edge of the falls, she arose into space, escaping
from the thundering cataract in the center of a lunar rainbow.—Page 297.

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THE ESCAPE FROM NIAGARA.

Several cannon shot swept over the Terror without hitting its low-lying deck. The sun had set, and through the twilight the moon's rays shone upon us from the south. The speed of our craft, doubled by the speed of the current, was prodigious! In another moment, we should plunge into that black hollow which forms the very center of the Canadian Falls. * * * *

Suddenly a sharp noise was heard from the mechanism which throbbed within our craft. The long gangways folded back on the sides of the machine, spread out like wings; and at the moment when the Terror reached the very edge of the falls, she arose into space, escaping from the thundering cataract in the center of a lunar rainbow.—Page 227.

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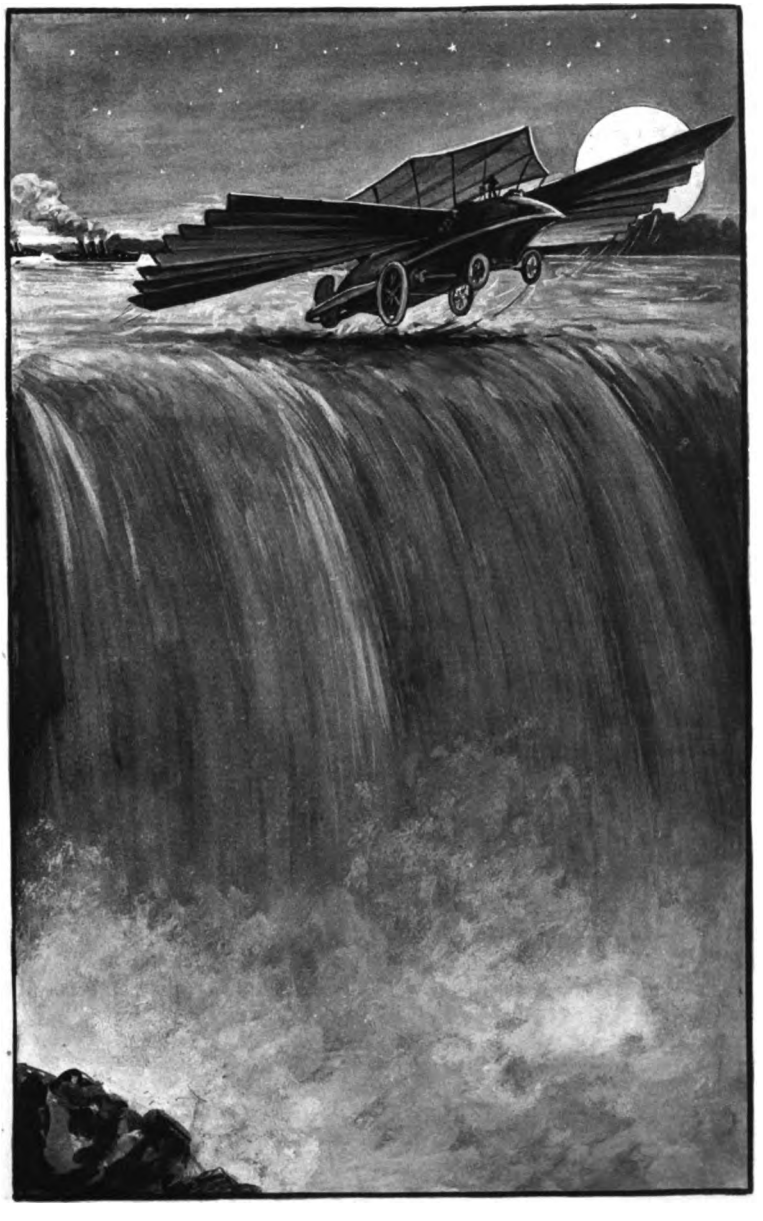

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lators? But how were these piles or accumulators charged? Unless, indeed, the electricity was drawn directly from the surrounding air or from the water, by processes hitherto unknown. And I asked myself with intense eagerness if in the present situation, I might be able to discover these secrets.

Then I thought of my companions, left behind on the shore of Black Rock Creek. One of them, I knew, was wounded; perhaps the others were also. Having seen me dragged overboard by the hawser, could they possibly suppose that I had been rescued by the Terror? Surely not! Doubtless the news of my death had already been telegraphed to Mr. Ward from Toledo. And now who would dare to undertake a new campaign against this "Master of the World"?

These thoughts occupied my mind as I awaited the captain's appearance on the deck. He did not appear.

I soon began to feel very hungry; for I must have fasted now nearly twenty-four hours. I had eaten nothing since our hasty meal in the woods, even if that had been the night before. And judging by the pangs which now assailed my stomach, I began to wonder if I had not been snatched on board the Terror two days before,—or even more.

Happily the question if they meant to feed me, and how they meant to feed me, was solved at once. The man at the bow left his post, descended, and reappeared. Then, without saying a word, he placed some food before me and returned to his place. Some potted meat, dried fish, sea-biscuit, and a pot of ale so strong that I had to mix it with water, such was the meal to which I did full justice. My fellow travelers had doubtless eaten before I came out of the cabin, and they did not join me.

There was nothing further to attract my eyes, and I sank again into thought. How would this adventure finish? Would I see this invisible captain at length, and would he restore me to liberty? Could I regain it in spite of him? That would depend on circumstances! But if the Terror kept thus far away from the shore, or if she traveled beneath the water, how could I escape from her? Unless we landed, and the machine became an automobile, must I not abandon all hope of escape?

Moreover—why should I not admit it?—to escape with-

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out having learned anything of the Terror's secrets would not have contented me at all. Although I could not thus far flatter myself upon the success of my campaign, and though I had come within a hairbreadth of losing my life, and though the future promised far more of evil than of good, yet after all, a step forward had been attained. To be sure, if I was never to be able to re-enter into communication with the world, if, like this Master of the World who had voluntarily placed himself outside the law, I was now placed outside humanity, then the fact that I had reached the Terror would have little value.

The craft continued headed to the northeast, following the longer axis of Lake Erie. She was advancing at only half speed; for, had she been doing her best, she must some hours before have reached the northeastern extremity of the lake.

At this end Lake Erie has no other outlet than the Niagara River, by which it empties into Lake Ontario. Now, this river is barred by the famous cataract some fifteen miles beyond the important city of Buffalo. Since the Terror had not retreated by the Detroit River, down which she had descended from the upper lakes, how was she to escape from these waters, unless indeed she crossed by land?

The sun passed the meridian. The day was beautiful; warm but not unpleasantly so, thanks to the breeze made by our passage. The shores of the lake continued invisible, on both the Canadian and the American side.

Was the captain determined not to show himself? Had he some reason for remaining unknown? Such a precaution would indicate that he intended to set me at liberty in the evening, when the Terror could approach the shore unseen.

Toward two o'clock, however, I heard a slight noise; the central hatchway was raised. The man I had so impatiently awaited appeared on deck.

I must admit he paid no more attention to me, than his men had done. Going to the stern, he took the helm. The man whom he had relieved, after a few words in a low tone, left the deck, descending by the forward hatchway. The captain, having scanned the horizon, consulted the compass, and slightly altered our course. The speed of the Terror increased.

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This man, so interesting both to me and to the world, must have been some years over fifty. He was of middle height, with powerful shoulders, still very erect; a strong head, with thick hair rather gray than white, smooth shaven cheeks, and a short, crisp beard. His chest was broad, his jaw prominent, and he had that characteristic sign of tremendous energy, bushy eyebrows drawn sharply together. Assuredly he possessed a constitution of iron, splendid health, and warm red blood beneath his sun burned skin.

Like his companions the captain was dressed in sea-clothes covered by an oil-skin coat, and with a woolen cap which could be pulled down to cover his head entirely, when he so desired.

Need I add that the captain of the Terror was the other of the two men, who had watched my house in Long street. Moreover, if I recognized him, he also must recognize me as chief-inspector Strock, to whom had been assigned the task of penetrating the Great Eyrie.

I looked at him curiously. On his part, while he did not seek to avoid my eyes, he showed at least a singular indifference to the fact that he had a stranger on board.

As I watched him, the idea came to me, a suggestion which I had not connected with the first view of him in Washington, that I had already seen this characteristic figure. Was it in one of the photographs held in the police department, or was it merely a picture in some shop window? But the remembrance was very vague. Perhaps I merely imagined it.

Well, though his companions had not had the politeness to answer me, perhaps he would be more courteous. He spoke the same language as I, although I could not feel quite positive that he was of American birth. He might indeed have decided to pretend not to understand me, so as to avoid all discussion while he held me prisoner.

In that case, what did he mean to do with me? Did he intend to dispose of me without further ceremony? Was he only waiting for night to throw me overboard? Did even the little which I knew of him, make me a danger of which he must rid himself? But in that case, he might better have left me at the end of his anchor line. That would have saved him the necessity of drowning me over again.

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I turned, I walked to the stern, I stopped full in front of him. Then, at length, he fixed full upon me a glance that burned like a flame.

"Are you the captain?" I asked.

He was silent.

"This boat! Is it really the Terror?"

To this question also there was no response. Then I reached toward him; I would have taken hold of his arm.

He repelled me without violence, but with a movement that suggested tremendous restrained power.

Planting myself again before him, I demanded in a louder tone, "What do you mean to do with me?"

Words seemed almost ready to burst from his lips, which he compressed with visible irritation. As though to check his speech he turned his head aside. His hand touched a regulator of some sort, and the machine rapidly increased its speed.

Anger almost mastered me. I wanted to cry out "So be it! Keep your silence! I know who you are, just as I know your machine, recognized at Madison, at Boston, at Lake Kirdall. Yes; it is you, who have rushed so recklessly over our roads, our seas and our lakes! Your boat is the Terror; and you her commander, wrote that letter to the government. It is you who fancy you can fight the entire world. You, who call yourself the Master of the World!"

And how could he have denied it! I saw at that moment the famous initials inscribed upon the helm!

Fortunately I restrained myself; and despairing of getting any response to my questions, I returned to my seat near the hatchway of my cabin.

For long hours, I patiently watched the horizon in the hope that land would soon appear. Yes, I sat waiting! For I was reduced to that! Waiting! No doubt, before the day closed, the Terror must reach the end of Lake Erie, since she continued her course steadily to the northeast.

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CHAPTER XIV
NIAGARA

THE hours passed, and the situation did not change. The steersman returned on deck, and the captain, descending, watched the movement of the engines. Even when our speed increased, these engines continued working without noise, and with remarkable smoothness. There was never one of those inevitable breaks, with which in most motors the pistons sometimes miss a stroke. I concluded that the Terror, in each of its transformations must be worked by rotary engines. But I could not assure myself of this.

For the rest, our direction did not change. Always we headed toward the northeast end of the lake, and hence toward Buffalo.

Why, I wondered, did the captain persist in following this route? He could not intend to stop at Buffalo, in the midst of a crowd of boats and shipping of every kind. If he meant to leave the lake by water, there was only the Niagara River to follow; and its Falls would be impassable, even to such a machine as this. The only escape was by the Detroit River, and the Terror was constantly leaving that farther behind.

Then another idea occurred to me. Perhaps the captain was only waiting for night to return to the shore of the lake. There, the boat, changed to an automobile, would quickly cross the neighboring States. If I did not succeed in making my escape, during this passage across the land, all hope of regaining my liberty would be gone.

True, I might learn where this Master of the World hid himself. I might learn what no one had yet been able to discover, assuming always that he did not dispose of me at one time or another—and what I expected his "disposal" would be, is easily comprehended.

I knew the northeast end of Lake Erie well, having often visited that section of New York State which extends westward from Albany to Buffalo. Three years before, a police mission had led me to explore carefully the shores of the Niagara River, both above and below the cataract and its Suspension Bridge. I had visited the two principal islands between Buffalo and the little city of Niagara Falls, I had explored Navy Island and also Goat Island, which

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separates the American falls from those of the Canadian side.

Thus if an opportunity for flight presented itself, I should not find myself in an unknown district. But would this chance offer? And at heart, did I desire it, or would I seize upon it? What secrets still remained in this affair in which good fortune—or was it evil fortune—had so closely entangled me!

On the other hand, I saw no real reason to suppose that there was any chance of my reaching the shores of the Niagara River. The Terror would surely not venture into this trap which had no exit. Probably she would not even go to the extremity of the lake.

Such were the thoughts that spun through my excited brain, while my eyes remained fixed upon the empty horizon.

And always one persistent question remained insolvable. Why had the captain written to me personally that threatening letter? Why had he spied upon me in Washington? What bond attached him to the Great Eyrie? There might indeed be subterranean canals which gave him passage to Lake Kirdall, but could he pierce the impenetrable fortress of the Eyrie? No! That was beyond him!

Toward four o'clock in the afternoon, reckoning by the speed of the Terror and her direction, I knew we must be approaching Buffalo; and indeed, its outlines began to show some fifteen miles ahead. During our passage, a few boats had been seen, but we had passed them at a long distance, a distance which our captain could easily keep as great as he pleased. Moreover, the Terror lay so low upon the water, that at even a mile away it would have been difficult to discover her.

Now, however, the hills encircling the end of Lake Erie, came within vision, beyond Buffalo, forming the sort of funnel by which Lake Erie pours its waters into the channel of the Niagara river. Some dunes rose on the right, groups of trees stood out here and there. In the distance, several freight steamers and fishing smacks appeared. The sky became spotted with trails of smoke, which were swept along by a light eastern breeze.

What was our captain thinking of in still heading toward the port of Buffalo! Did not prudence forbid him to

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venture further? At each moment, I expected that he would give a sweep of the helm and turn away toward the western shore of the lake. Or else, I thought, he would prepare to plunge beneath the surface. But this persistence in holding our bow toward Buffalo was impossible to understand!

At length the helmsman, whose eyes were watching the northeastern shore, made a sign to his companion. The latter, leaving the bow, went to the central hatchway, and descended into the engine room. Almost immediately the captain came on deck, and joining the helmsman, spoke with him in a low voice.

The latter, extending his hand toward Buffalo, pointed out two black spots, which showed five or six miles distant on the starboard side. The captain studied them attentively. Then shrugging his shoulders, he seated himself at the stern without altering the course of the Terror.

A quarter of an hour later, I could see plainly that there were two smoke clouds at the point they had studied so carefully. Little by little the black spots beneath these became more defined. They were two long, low steamers, which, coming from the port of Buffalo, were approaching rapidly.

Suddenly it struck me that these were the two torpedo destroyers of which Mr. Ward had spoken, and which I had been told to summon in case of need.

These destroyers were of the newest type, the swiftest boats yet constructed in the country. Driven by powerful engines of the latest make, they had covered almost thirty miles an hour. It is true, the Terror commanded an even greater speed, and always, if she were surrounded so that flight was impossible, she could submerge herself out of reach of all pursuit. In truth, the destroyers would have had to be submarines to attack the Terror with any chance of success. And I know not, if even in that case, the contest would have been equal.

Meanwhile, it seemed to me evident that the commanders of the two ships had been warned, perhaps by Mr. Wells who, returning swiftly to Toledo, might have telegraphed to them the news of our defeat. It appeared, moreover, that they had seen the Terror, for they were headed at full speed toward her. Yet our captain, seemingly giving them

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no thought whatever, continued his course toward the Niagara River.

What would the torpedo destroyers do? Presumably, they would maneuver so as to seek to shut the Terror within the narrowing end of the lake where the Niagara offered her no passage.

Our captain now took the helm. One of the men was at the bow, the other in the engine room. Would the order be given for me to go down into the cabin?

It was not, to my extreme satisfaction. To speak frankly, no one paid any attention to me. It was as if I had not been on board. I watched, therefore, not without mixed emotions, the approach of the destroyers. Less than two miles distant now they separated in such a way as to hold the Terror between their fires.

As to the Master of the World, his manner indicated only the most profound disdain. He seemed sure that these destroyers were powerless against him. With a touch to his machinery he could distance them, no matter what their speed! With a few turns of her engine, the Terror would dart beyond their cannon shots! Or, in the depths of the lake, what projectiles could find the submarine!

Five minutes later, scarcely a mile separated us from the two powerful fighters which pursued us. Our captain permitted them to approach still closer. Then he pressed upon a handle. The Terror, doubling the action of her propellers, leaped across the surface of the lake. She played with the destroyers! Instead of turning in flight, she continued her forward course. Who knew if she would not even have the audacity to pass between her two enemies, to coax them after her, until the hour when, as night closed in, they would be forced to abandon the useless pursuit!

The city of Buffalo was now in plain view on the border of the lake. I saw its huge buildings, its church towers, its grain elevators. Only four or five miles ahead, Niagara river opened to the northward.

Under these new conditions which way should I turn? When we passed in front of the destroyers, or perhaps between them, should I not throw myself into the water? I was a good swimmer, and such a chance might never occur again. The captain could not stop to recapture me.

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By diving could I not easily escape, even from a bullet? I should surely be seen by one or other of the pursuers. Perhaps, even, their commanders had been warned of my presence on board the Terror. Would not a boat be sent to rescue me?

Evidently my chance of success would be even greater, if the Terror entered the narrow waters of Niagara River. At Navy Island I would be able to set foot on territory that I knew well. But to suppose that our captain would rush into this river where he might be swept over the great cataract! That seemed impossible! I resolved to await the destroyers' closest approach and at the last moment I would decide.

Yet my resolution to escape was but half-hearted. I could not resign myself thus to lose all chance of following up this mystery. My instincts as a police official revolted. I had but to reach out my hand in order to seize this man who had been outlawed! Should I let him escape me! No! I would not save myself! Yet, on the other hand, what fate awaited me, and where would I be carried by the Terror, if I remained on board?

It was a quarter past six. The destroyers, quivering and trembling under the strain of their speed, gained on us perceptibly. They were now directly astern, leaving between them a distance of twelve or fifteen cable lengths. The Terror, without increasing her speed, saw one of them approach on the port side, the other to starboard.

I did not leave my place. The man at the bow was close by me. Immovable at the helm, his eyes burning beneath his contracted brows, the captain waited. He meant, perhaps, to finish the chase by one last maneuver.

Suddenly, a puff of smoke rose from the destroyer on our left. A projectile, brushing the surface of the water, passed in front of the Terror, and sped beyond the destroyer on our right.

I glanced around anxiously. Standing by my side, the lookout seemed to await a sign from the captain. As for him, he did not even turn his head; and I shall never forget the expression of disdain imprinted on his visage.

At this moment, I was pushed suddenly toward the hatchway of my cabin, which was fastened above me. At the same instant the other hatchways were closed; the deck be-

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came watertight. I heard a single throb of the machinery, and the plunge was made, the submarine disappeared beneath the waters of the lake.

Cannon shot still boomed above us. Their heavy echo reached my ear; then everything was peace. Only a faint light penetrated through the porthole into my cabin. The submarine, without the least rolling or pitching, sped silently through the deeps.

I had seen with what rapidity, and also with what ease the transformation of the Terror had been made. No less easy and rapid, perhaps, would be her change to an automobile.

And now what would this Master of the World do? Presumably he would change his course, unless, indeed, he preferred to speed to land, and there continue his route along the roads. It still seemed more probable, however, that he would turn back toward the west, and after distancing the destroyers, regain the Detroit River. Our submersion would probably only last long enough to escape out of cannon range, or until night forbade pursuit.

Fate, however, had decreed a different ending to this exciting chase. Scarce ten minutes had passed when there seemed some confusion on board. I heard rapid words exchanged in the engine room. The steadily moving machinery became noisy and irregular. At once I suspected that some accident compelled the submarine to reascend.

I was not mistaken. In a moment, the semi-obscurity of my cabin was pierced by sunshine. The Terror had risen above water. I heard steps on the deck, and the hatchways were re-opened, including mine. I sprang up the ladder.

The captain had resumed his place at the helm, while the two men were busy below. I looked to see if the destroyers were still in view. Yes! Only a quarter of a mile away! The Terror had already been seen, and the powerful vessels which enforced the mandates of our government were swinging into position to give chase. Once more the Terror sped in the direction of Niagara River.

I must confess, I could make nothing of this maneuver. Plunging into a cul-de-sac, no longer able to seek the depths because of the accident, the Terror might, indeed, temporarily distance her pursuers; but she must find her path

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barred by them when she attempted to return. Did she intend to land, and if so, could she hope to outrun the telegrams which would warn every police agency of her approach?

We were now not half a mile ahead. The destroyers pursued us at top speed, though being now directly behind, they were in poor position for using their guns. Our captain seemed content to keep this distance; though it would have been easy for him to increase it, and then at nightfall, to dodge back behind the enemy.

Already Buffalo had disappeared on our right, and a little after seven o'clock the opening of the Niagara River appeared ahead. If he entered there, knowing that he could not return, our captain must have lost his mind! And in truth was he not insane, this man who proclaimed himself, who believed himself, Master of the World?

I watched him there, calm, impassive not even turning his head to note the progress of the destroyers and I wondered at him.

This end of the lake was absolutely deserted. Freight steamers bound for the towns on the banks of the upper Niagara are not numerous, as its navigation is dangerous. Not one was in sight. Not even a fishing-boat crossed the path of the Terror. Even the two destroyers would soon be obliged to pause in their pursuit, if we continued our mad rush through these dangerous waters.

I have said that the Niagara River flows between New York and Canada. Its width, of about three quarters of a mile, narrows as it approaches the falls. Its length, from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario, is about fifteen leagues. It flows in a northerly direction, until it empties the waters of Lake Superior, Michigan, Huron, and Erie into Ontario, the last lake of this mighty chain. The celebrated falls, which occur in the midst of this great river have a height of over a hundred and fifty feet. They are called sometimes the Horse-shoe Falls, because they curve inward like the iron shoe. The Indians have given them the name of "Thunder of Waters," and in truth a mighty thunder roars from them without cessation, and with a tumult which is heard for several miles away.

Between Lake Erie, and the little city of Niagara Falls, two islands divide the current of the river, Navy Island,

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a league above the cataract, and Goat Island, which separates the American and the Canadian Falls. Indeed, on the lower point of this latter isle stood once that "Terrapin Tower" so daringly built in the midst of the plunging waters on the very edge of the abyss. It has been destroyed; for the constant wearing away of the stone beneath the cataract makes the ledge move with the ages slowly up the river, and the tower has been drawn into the gulf.

The town of Fort Erie stands on the Canadian shore at the entrance of the river. Two other towns are set along the banks above the falls, Schlosser on the right bank, and Chippewa on the left, located on either side of Navy Island. It is at this point that the current, bound within a narrower channel, begins to move at tremendous speed, to become two miles further on, the celebrated cataract.

The Terror had already passed Fort Erie. The sun in the west touched the edge of the Canadian horizon, and the moon, faintly seen, rose above the mists of the south. Darkness would not envelop us for another hour.

The destroyers, with huge clouds of smoke streaming from their funnels, followed us a mile behind. They sped between banks green with shade trees and dotted with cottages which lay among lovely gardens.

Obviously the Terror could no longer turn back. The destroyers shut her in completely. It is true their commanders did not know, as I did, that an accident to her machinery had forced her to the surface, and that it was impossible for her to escape them by another plunge. Nevertheless, they continued to follow, and would assuredly maintain their pursuit to the very last.

I marveled at the intrepidity of their chase through these dangerous waters. I marveled still more at the conduct of our captain. Within a half hour now, his course would be barred by the cataract. No matter how perfect his machine, it could not escape the power of the great falls. If the current once mastered our engines, we should inevitably disappear in the gulf nearly two hundred feet deep which the waters have dug at the base of the falls! Perhaps, however, our captain had still power to turn to one of the shores and flee by the automobile routes.

In the midst of this excitement, what action should I

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take personally? Should I attempt to gain the shores of Navy Island, if we indeed advanced that far? If I did not seize this chance, never after what I had learned of his secrets, never would the Master of the World restore me to liberty.

I suspected, however, that my flight was no longer possible. If I was not confined within my cabin, I no longer remained unwatched. While the captain retained his place at the helm, his assistant by my side never removed his eyes from me. At the first movement, I should be seized and locked within my room. For the present, my fate was evidently bound up with that of the Terror.

The distance which separated us from the two destroyers was now growing rapidly less. Soon they were but a few cable-lengths away. Could the motor of the Terror, since the accident, no longer hold its speed! Yet the captain showed not the least anxiety, and made no effort to reach land!

We could hear the hissing of the steam which escaped from the valves of the destroyers, to mingle with the streamers of black smoke. But we heard, even more plainly, the roar of the cataract, now less than three miles away.

The Terror took the left branch of the river in passing Navy Island. At this point, she was within easy reach of the shore, yet she shot ahead. Five minutes later, we could see the first trees of Goat Island. The current became more and more irresistible. If the Terror did not stop, the destroyers could not much longer follow her. If it pleased our accursed captain to plunge us into the vortex of the falls, surely they did not mean to follow into the abyss!

Indeed, at this moment they signaled each other, and stopped the pursuit. They were scarce more than six hundred feet from the cataract. Then their thunders burst on the air and several cannon shot swept over the Terror without hitting its low-lying deck.

The sun had set, and through the twilight the moon's rays shone upon us from the south. The speed of our craft, doubled by the speed of the current, was prodigious! In another moment, we should plunge into that black hollow which forms the very center of the Canadian Falls.

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With an eye of horror, I saw the shores of Goat Island flashed by, then came the Isles of the Three Sisters, drowned in the spray from the abyss.

I sprang up; I started to throw myself into the water, in the desperate hope of gaining this last refuge. One of the men seized me from behind.

Suddenly a sharp noise was heard from the mechanism which throbbed within our craft. The long gangways folded back on the sides of the machine, spread out like wings, and at the moment when the Terror reached the very edge of the falls, she arose into space, escaping from the thundering cataract in the center of a lunar rainbow.

CHAPTER XV
THE EAGLE'S NEST

On the morrow, when I awoke after a sound sleep, our vehicle seemed motionless. It seemed to me evident that we were not running upon land. Yet neither were we rushing through or beneath the waters; nor yet soaring across the sky. Had the inventor regained that mysterious hiding-place of his, where no human being had ever set foot before him?

And now, since he had not disembarrassed himself of my presence, was his secret about to be revealed to me?

It seemed astonishing that I had slept so profoundly during most of our voyage through the air. It puzzled me and I asked if this sleep had not been caused by some drug, mixed with my last meal, the captain of the Terror having wished thus to prevent me from knowing the place where we landed. All that I can recall of the previous night is the terrible impression made upon me by that moment when the machine, instead of being caught in the vortex of the cataract rose under the impulse of its machinery like a bird with its huge wings beating with tremendous power!

So this machine actually fulfilled a four-fold use! It was at the same time automobile, boat, submarine, and airship. Earth, sea and air,—it could move through all three elements! And with what power! With what speed! A few instants sufficed to complete its marvelous transformations. The same engine drove it along all its courses!

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And I had been a witness of its metamorphoses! But that of which I was still ignorant, and which I could perhaps discover, was the source of the energy which drove the machine, and above all, who was the inspired inventor who, after having created it, in every detail, guided it with so much ability and audacity!

At the moment when the Terror rose above the Canadian Falls, I was held down against the hatchway of my cabin. The clear, moonlit evening had permitted me to note the direction taken by the air-ship. It followed the course of the river and passed the Suspension Bridge three miles below the falls. It is here that the irresistible rapids of the Niagara River begin, where the river bends sharply to descend toward Lake Ontario.

On leaving this point, I was sure that we had turned toward the east. The captain continued at the helm. I had not addressed a word to him. What good would it do? He would not have answered. I noted that the Terror seemed to be guided in its course through the air with surprising ease. Assuredly the roads of the air were as familiar to it as those of the seas and of the lands!

In the presence of such results, could one not understand the enormous pride of this man who proclaimed himself Master of the World? Was he not in control of a machine infinitely superior to any that had ever sprung from the hand of man, and against which men were powerless? In truth, why should he sell this marvel? Why should he accept the millions offered him? Yes, I comprehended now that absolute confidence in himself which was expressed in his every attitude. And where might not his ambition carry him, if by its own excess it mounted some day into madness!

A half hour after the Terror soared into the air, I had sunk into complete unconsciousness, without realizing its approach. I repeat, it must have been caused by some drug. Without doubt, our commander did not wish me to know the road he followed.

Hence I cannot say whether the aviator continued his flight through space, or whether the mariner sailed the surface of some sea or lake, or the chauffeur sped across the American roads. No recollection remains with me of what passed during that night of July thirty-first.

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Now, what was to follow from this adventure? And especially concerning myself, what would be its end?

I have said that at the moment when I awoke from my strange sleep, the Terror seemed to me completely motionless. I could hardly be mistaken; whatever had been her method of progress, I should have felt some movement, even in the air. I lay in my berth in the cabin, where I had been shut in without knowing it, just as I had been on the preceding night which I had passed on board the Terror on Lake Erie.

My business now was to learn if I would be allowed to go on deck here where the machine had landed. I attempted to raise the hatchway. It was fastened.

"Ah!" said I, "am I to be kept here until the Terror recommences its travels?" Was not that, indeed, the only time when escape was hopeless?

My impatience and anxiety may be appreciated. I knew not how long this halt might continue.

I had not a quarter of an hour to wait. A noise of bars being removed came to my ear. The hatchway was raised from above. A wave of light and air penetrated my cabin.

With one bound I reached the deck. My eyes in an instant swept round the horizon.

The Terror, as I had thought, rested quiet on the ground. She was in the midst of a rocky hollow measuring from fifteen to eighteen hundred feet in circumference. A floor of yellow gravel carpeted its entire extent, unrelieved by a single tuft of herbage.

This hollow formed an almost regular oval, with its longer diameter extending north and south. As to the surrounding wall, what was its height, what the character of its crest, I could not judge. Above us was gathered a fog so heavy, that the rays of the sun had not yet pierced it. Heavy trails of cloud drifted across the sandy floor, Doubtless the morning was still young, and this mist might later be dissolved.

It was quite cold here, although this was the first day of August. I concluded therefore that we must be far in the north, or else high above sea-level. We must still be somewhere on the New Continent; though where, it was impossible to surmise. Yet no matter how rapid our flight

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had been, the air-ship could not have traversed either ocean in the dozen hours since our departure from Niagara.

At this moment, I saw the captain come from an opening in the rocks, probably a grotto, at the base of this cliff hidden in the fog. Occasionally, in the mists above, appeared the shadows of huge birds. Their raucous cries were the sole interruption to the profound silence. Who knows if they were not affrighted by the arrival of this formidable, winged monster, which they could not match either in might or speed.

Everything led me to believe that it was here that the Master of the World withdrew in the intervals between his prodigious journeys. Here was the garage of his automobile; the harbor of his boat; the hangar of his air-ship.

And now the Terror stood motionless at the bottom of this hollow. At last I could examine her; and it looked as if her owners had no intention of preventing me. The truth is that the commander seemed to take no more notice of my presence than before. His two companions joined him, and the three did not hesitate to enter together into the grotto I had seen. What a chance to study the machine, at least its exterior! As to its inner parts, probably I should never get beyond conjecture.

In fact, except for that of my cabin, the hatchways were closed; and it would be vain for me to attempt to open them. At any rate, it might be more interesting to find out what kind of propeller drove the Terror in these many transformations.

I jumped to the ground and found I was left at leisure, to proceed with this first examination.

The machine was as I have said spindle-shaped. The bow was sharper than the stern. The body was of aluminium, the wings of a substance whose nature I could not determine. The body rested on four wheels, about two feet in diameter. These had pneumatic tires so thick as to assure ease of movement at any speed. Their spokes spread out like paddles or battledores; and when the Terror moved either on or under the water, they must have increased her pace.

These wheels were not however, the principal propeller. This consisted of two "Parsons" turbines placed on either side of the keel. Driven with extreme rapidity by the en-

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gine, they urged the boat onward in the water by twin screws, and I even questioned if they were not powerful enough to propel the machine through the air.

The chief aerial support, however, was that of the great wings, now again in repose, and folded back along the sides. Thus the theory of the "heavier than air" flying machine was employed by the inventor, a system which enabled him to dart through space with a speed probably superior to that of the largest birds.

As to the agent which set in action these various mechanisms, I repeat, it was, it could be, no other than electricity. But from what source did his batteries get their power? Had he somewhere an electric factory, to which he must return? Were the dynamos, perhaps working in one of the caverns of this hollow?

The result of my examination was that, while I could see that the machine used wheels and turbine screws and wings, I knew nothing of either its engine, nor of the force which drove it. To be sure, the discovery of this secret would be of little value to me. To employ it I must first be free. And after what I knew—little as that really was—the Master of the World would never release me.

There remained, it is true, the chance of escape. But would an opportunity ever present itself? If there could be none during the voyages of the Terror, might there possibly be, while we remained in this retreat?

The first question to be solved was the location of this hollow. What communication did it have with the surrounding region? Could one only depart from it by a flying-machine? And in what part of the United States were we? Was it not reasonable to estimate, that our flight through the darkness had covered several hundred leagues?

There was one very natural hypothesis which deserved to be considered, if not actually accepted. What more natural harbor could there be for the Terror than the Great Eyrie? Was it too difficult a flight for our aviator to reach the summit? Could he not soar anywhere that the vultures and the eagles could? Did not that inaccessible Eyrie offer to the Master of the World just such a retreat as our police had been unable to discover, one in which he might well believe himself safe from all attacks? Moreover, the dis-

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tance between Niagara Falls and this part of the Blueridge Mountains, did not exceed four hundred and fifty miles, a flight which would have been easy for the Terror.

Yes, this idea more and more took possession of me. It crowded out a hundred other unsupported suggestions. Did not this explain the nature of the bond which existed between the Great Eyrie and the letter which I had received with our commander's initials? And the threats against me if I renewed the ascent! And the espionage to which I had been subjected! And all the phenomena of which the Great Eyrie had been the theater, were they not to be attributed to this same cause—though what lay behind the phenomena was not yet clear? Yes, the Great Eyrie! The Great Eyrie!

But since it had been impossible for me to penetrate here, would it not be equally impossible for me to get out again, except upon the Terror? Ah, if the mists would but lift! Perhaps I should recognize the place. What was as yet a mere hypothesis, would become a starting point to act upon.

However, since I had freedom to move about, since neither the captain nor his men paid any heed to me, I resolved to explore the hollow. The three of them were all in the grotto toward the north end of the oval. Therefore I would commence my inspection at the southern end.

Reaching the rocky wall, I skirted along its base and found it broken by many crevices; above, arose more solid rocks of that feldspar of which the chain of the Alleghanies largely consists. To what height the rock wall rose, or what was the character of its summit, was still impossible to see. I must wait until the sun had scattered the mists.

In the meantime, I continued to follow along the base of the cliff. None of its cavities seemed to extend inward to any distance. Several of them contained débris from the hand of man, bits of broken wood, heaps of dried grasses. On the ground were still to be seen the foot-prints that the captain and his men must have left, perhaps months before, upon the sand.

My jailers, being doubtless very busy in their cabin, did not show themselves until they had arranged and packed several large bundles. Did they purpose to carry those on board the Terror? And were they packing up with the intention of permanently leaving their retreat?

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In half an hour my explorations were completed and I returned toward the center. Here and there were heaped up piles of ashes, bleached by weather. There were fragments of burned planks and beams; posts to which clung rusted iron-work; armatures of metal twisted by fire; all the remnants of some intricate mechanism destroyed by the flames.

Clearly at some period not very remote the hollow had been the scene of a conflagration, accidental or intentional. Naturally I connected this with the phenomena observed at the Great Eyrie, the flames which rose above the crest, the noises which had so frightened the people of Pleasant Garden and Morganton. But of what mechanisms were these the fragments, and what reason had our captain for destroying them?

At this moment I felt a breath of air; a breeze came from the east. The sky swiftly cleared. The hollow was filled with light from the rays of the sun which appeared midway between the horizon and the zenith.

A cry escaped me! The crest of the rocky wall rose a hundred feet above me. And on the eastern side was revealed that easily recognizable pinnacle, the rock like a mounting eagle. It was the same that had held the attention of Mr. Elias Smith and myself, when we had looked up at it from the outer side of the Great Eyrie.

Thus there was no further doubt. In its flight during the night the airship had covered the distance between Lake Erie and North Carolina. It was in the depth of this Eyrie that the machine had found shelter! This was the nest, worthy of the gigantic and powerful bird created by the genius of our captain! The fortress whose mighty walls none but he could scale! Perhaps even, he had discovered in the depths of some cavern some subterranean passage by which he himself could quit the Great Eyrie, leaving the Terror safely sheltered within.

At last I saw it all! This explained the first letter sent me from the Great Eyrie itself with the threat of death. If we had been able to penetrate into this hollow, who knows if the secrets of the Master of the World might not have been discovered before he had been able to set them beyond our reach?

I stood there, motionless; my eyes fixed on that mounting

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eagle of stone, prey to a sudden, violent emotion. Whatsoever might be the consequences to myself, was it not my duty to destroy this machine, here and now, before it could resume its menacing flight of mastery across the world!

Steps approached behind me. I turned. The inventor stood by my side, and pausing looked me in the face.

I was unable to restrain myself; the words burst forth—"The Great Eyrie! The Great Eyrie!"

"Yes, Inspector Strock."

"And you! You are the Master of the World?"

"Of that world to which I have already proved myself to be the most powerful of men."

"You!" I reiterated, stupefied with amazement.

"I," responded he, drawing himself up in all his pride, "I, Robur—Robur, the Conqueror!"

CHAPTER XVI

ROBUR, THE CONQUEROR

ROBUR, the Conqueror! This then was the likeness I had vaguely recalled. Some years before the portrait of this extraordinary man had been printed in all the American newspapers, under date of the thirteenth of June, the day after this personage had made his sensational appearance at the meeting of the Weldon Institute at Philadelphia.

I had noted the striking character of the portrait at the time; the square shoulders; the back like a regular trapezoid, its longer side formed by that geometrical shoulder line; the robust neck; the enormous spheroidal head. The eyes at the least emotion, burned with fire, while above them were the heavy, permanently contracted brows, which signalized such energy. The hair was short and crisp, with a glitter as of metal in its lights. The huge breast rose and fell like a blacksmith's forge; and the thighs, the arms and hands, were worthy of the mighty body. The narrow beard was the same also, with the smooth shaven cheeks which showed the powerful muscles of the jaw.

And this was Robur the Conqueror, who now stood before me, who revealed himself to me, hurling forth his name like a threat, within his own impenetrable fortress!

Let me recall briefly the facts which had previously

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drawn upon Robur the Conqueror the attention of the entire world. The Weldon Institute was a club devoted to aeronautics under the presidency of one of the chief personages of Philadelphia, commonly called Uncle Prudent. Its secretary was Mr. Phillip Evans. The members of the Institute were devoted to the theory of the "lighter than air" machine; and under their two leaders were constructing an enormous dirigible balloon, the "Goahead."

At a meeting in which they were discussing the details of the construction of their balloon, this unknown Robur had suddenly appeared and, ridiculing all their plans, had insisted that the only true solution of flight lay with the heavier than air machines, and that he had proven this by constructing one.

He was in his turn doubted and ridiculed by the members of the club, who called him in mockery Robur the Conqueror. In the tumult that followed, revolver shots were fired; and the intruder disappeared.

That same night he had by force abducted the president and the secretary of the club, and had taken them, much against their will upon a voyage in the wonderful air-ship "the Albatross" which he had constructed. He meant thus to prove to them beyond argument the correctness of his assertions. This ship, a hundred feet long, was upheld in the air by a large number of horizontal screws and was driven forward by vertical screws at its bow and stern. It was managed by a crew of at least half a dozen men, who seemed absolutely devoted to their leader, Robur.

After a voyage almost completely around the world, Mr. Prudent and Mr. Evans managed to escape from the "Albatross" after a desperate struggle. They even managed to cause an explosion on the airship, destroying it, and involving the inventor and all his crew in a terrific fall from the sky into the Pacific ocean.

Mr. Prudent and Mr. Evans then returned to Philadelphia. They had learned that the "Albatross" had been constructed on an unknown isle of the Pacific called Island X; but since the location of this hiding-place was wholly unknown, its discovery lay scarcely within the bounds of possibility. Moreover, the search seemed entirely unnecessary, as the vengeful prisoners were quite certain that they had destroyed their jailers.

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Hence the two millionaires, restored to their homes, went calmly on with the construction of their own machine, the "Goahead." They hoped by means of it to soar once more into the regions they had traversed with Robur, and to prove to themselves that their lighter than air machine was at least the equal of the heavy "Albatross." If they had not persisted, they would not have been true Americans.

On the twentieth of April in the following year the "Goahead" was finished and the ascent was made, from Fairmount Park in Philadelphia. I myself was there with thousands of other spectators. We saw the huge balloon rise gracefully; and, thanks to its powerful screws, it maneuvered in every direction with surprising ease. Suddenly a cry was heard, a cry repeated from a thousand throats. Another airship had appeared in the distant skies and it now approached with marvelous rapidity. It was another "Albatross," perhaps even superior to the first. Robur and his men had escaped death in the Pacific; and, burning for revenge, they had constructed a second airship in their secret Island X.

Like a gigantic bird of prey, the "Albatross" hurled itself upon the "Goahead." Doubtless, Robur, while avenging himself wished also to prove the immeasurable superiority of the heavier than air machines.

Mr. Prudent and Mr. Evans defended themselves as best they could. Knowing that their balloon had nothing like the horizontal speed of the "Albatross," they attempted to take advantage of their superior lightness and rise above her. The "Goahead," throwing out all her ballast, soared to a height of over twenty thousand feet. Yet even there the "Albatross" rose above her, and circled round her with ease.

Suddenly an explosion was heard. The enormous gas-bag of the "Goahead," expanding under the dilation of its contents at this great height, had finally burst.

Half-emptied, the balloon fell rapidly.

Then to our universal astonishment, the "Albatross" shot down after her rival, not to finish the work of destruction but to bring rescue. Yes! Robur, forgetting his vengeance, rejoined the sinking "Goahead," and his men lifted Mr. Prudent, Mr. Evans, and the aeronaut who accompanied them, onto the platform of his craft. Then

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the balloon, being at length entirely empty, fell to its destruction among the trees of Fairmount Park.

The public was overwhelmed with astonishment, with fear! Now that Robur had recaptured his prisoners, how would he avenge himself? Would they be carried away, this time, forever?

The "Albatross" continued to descend, as if to land in the clearing at Fairmount Park. But if it came within reach, would not the infuriated crowd throw themselves upon the airship, tearing both it and its inventor to pieces?

The "Albatross" descended within six feet of the ground. I remember well the general movement forward with which the crowd threatened to attack it. Then Robur's voice rang out in words which even now I can repeat almost as he said them:

"Citizens of the United States, the president and the secretary of the Weldon Institute are again in my power. In holding them prisoners I would but be exercising my natural right of reprisal for the injuries they have done me. But the passion and resentment which have been roused both in them and you by the success of the 'Albatross,' show that the souls of men are not yet ready for the vast increase of power which the conquest of the air will bring to them. Uncle Prudent, Phillip Evans, you are free."

The three men rescued from the balloon leaped to the ground. The airship rose some thirty feet out of reach, and Robur recommenced:

"Citizens of the United States, the conquest of the air is made; but it shall not be given into your hands until the proper time. I leave, and I carry my secret with me. It will not be lost to humanity, but shall be entrusted to them when they have learned not to abuse it. Farewell, Citizens of the United States!"

Then the Albatross rose under the impulse of its mighty screws, and sped away amidst the hurrahs of the multitude.

I have ventured to remind my readers of this last scene somewhat in detail, because it seemed to reveal the state of mind of the remarkable personage who now stood before me. Apparently he had not then been animated by sentiments hostile to humanity. He was content to await the future; though his attitude undeniably revealed the immeasurable confidence which he had in his own genius, the

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immense pride which his almost superhuman powers had aroused within him.

It was not astonishing, moreover, that this haughtiness had little by little been aggravated to such a degree that he now presumed to enslave the entire world, as his public letter had suggested by its significant threats. His vehement mind had with time been roused to such over-excitement that he might easily be driven into the most violent excesses.

As to what had happened in the years since the last departure of the Albatross, I could only partly reconstruct this even with my present knowledge. It had not sufficed the prodigious inventor to create a flying machine, perfect as that was! He had planned to construct a machine which could conquer all the elements at once. Probably in the workshops of Island X, a selected body of devoted workmen had constructed, one by one, the pieces of this marvelous machine, with its quadruple transformation. Then the second Albatross must have carried these pieces to the Great Eyrie, where they had been put together, within easier access of the world of men than the far-off island had permitted. The Albatross itself had apparently been destroyed, whether by accident or design, within the eyrie. The Terror had then made its appearance on the roads of the United States and in the neighboring waters. And I have told under what conditions, after having been vainly pursued across Lake Erie, this remarkable masterpiece had risen through the air carrying me a prisoner on board.

CHAPTER XVII

IN THE NAME OF THE LAW

WHAT was to be the issue of this remarkable adventure? Could I bring it to any dénouement whatever, either sooner or later? Did not Robur hold the results wholly in his own hands? Probably I would never have such an opportunity for escape as had occurred to Mr. Prudent and Mr. Evans amid the islands of the Pacific. I could only wait. And how long might the waiting last!

To be sure, my curiosity had been partly satisfied. But even now I knew only the answer to the problems of the Great Eyrie. Having at length penetrated its circle, I com-

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prehended all the phenomena observed by the people of the Blueridge Mountains. I was assured that neither the country-folk throughout the region, nor the townfolk of Pleasant Garden and Morganton were in danger of volcanic eruptions or earthquakes. No subterranean forces whatever were battling within the bowels of the mountains. No crater had arisen in this corner of the Alleghanies. The Great Eyrie served merely as the retreat of Robur the Conqueror. This impenetrable hiding-place where he stored his materials and provisions, had without doubt been discovered by him during one of his aerial voyages in the Albatross. It was a retreat probably even more secure than that as yet undiscovered Island X in the Pacific.

This much I knew of him; but of this marvelous machine of his, of the secrets of its construction and propelling force, what did I really know? Admitting that this multiple mechanism was driven by electricity, and that this electricity was, as we knew it had been in the Albatross, extracted directly from the surrounding air by some new process, what were the details of its mechanism? I had not been permitted to see the engine; doubtless I should never see it.

On the question of my liberty I argued thus: Robur evidently intends to remain unknown. As to what he intends to do with his machine, I fear, recalling his letter, that the world must expect from it more of evil than of good. At any rate, the incognito which he has so carefully guarded in the past he must mean to preserve in the future. Now only one man can establish the identity of the Master of the World with Robur the Conqueror. This man is I his prisoner, I who have the right to arrest him, I, who ought to put my hand on his shoulder, saying, "In the Name of the Law——"

On the other hand, could I hope for a rescue from without? Evidently not. The police authorities must know everything that had happened at Black Rock Creek. Mr. Ward, advised of all the incidents, would have reasoned on the matter as follows: when the Terror quitted the creek dragging me at the end of her hawser, I had either been drowned or, since my body had not been recovered, I had been taken on board the Terror, and was in the hands of its commander.

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In the first case, there was nothing more to do than to write "deceased" after the name of John Strock, chief inspector of the federal police in Washington.

In the second case, could my confrères hope ever to see me again? The two destroyers which had pursued the "Terror" into the Niagara River had stopped, perforce, when the current threatened to drag them over the falls. At that moment, night was closing in, and what could be thought on board the destroyers but that the "Terror" had been engulfed in the abyss of the cataract? It was scarce possible that our machine had been seen when, amid the shades of night, it rose above the Horseshoe Falls, or when it winged its way high above the mountains on its route to the Great Eyrie.

With regard to my own fate, should I resolve to question Robur? Would he consent even to appear to hear me? Was he not content with having hurled at me his name? Would not that name seem to him to answer everything?

That day wore away without bringing the least change to the situation. Robur and his men continued actively at work upon the machine, which apparently needed considerable repair. I concluded that they meant to start forth again very shortly, and to take me with them. It would, however, have been quite possible to leave me at the bottom of the Eyrie. There would have been no way by which I could have escaped, and there were provisions at hand sufficient to keep me alive for many days.

What I studied particularly during this period was the mental state of Robur. He seemed to me under the dominance of a continuous excitement. What was it that his ever-seething brain now meditated? What projects was he forming for the future? Toward what region would he now turn? Would he put in execution the menaces expressed in his letter—the menaces of a madman!

The night of that first day, I slept on a couch of dry grass in one of the grottoes of the Great Eyrie. Food was set for me in this grotto each succeeding day. On the second and third of August, the three men continued at their work, scarcely once, however, exchanging any words, even in the midst of their labors. When the engines were all repaired to Robur's satisfaction, the men began putting stores aboard their craft, as if expecting a long absence. Perhaps the

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"Terror" was about to traverse immense distances; perhaps even, the captain intended to regain his Island X, in the midst of the Pacific.

Sometimes I saw him wander about the eyrie buried in thought, or he would stop and raise his arm toward heaven as if in defiance of that God with Whom he assumed to divide the empire of the world. Was not his overweening pride leading him toward insanity? An insanity which his two companions, hardly less excited than he, could do nothing to subdue! Had he not come to regard himself as mightier than the elements which he had so audaciously defied even when he possessed only an airship, the Albatross? And now, how much more powerful had he become, when earth, air and water combined to offer him an infinite field where none might follow him!

Hence I had much to fear from the future, even the most dread catastrophes. It was impossible for me to escape from the Great Eyrie, before being dragged into a new voyage. After that, how could I possibly get away while the "Terror" sped through the air or the ocean? My only chance must be when she crossed the land, and did so at some moderate speed. Surely a distant and feeble hope to cling to!

It will be recalled that after our arrival at the Great Eyrie, I had attempted to obtain some response from Robur, as to his purpose with me; but I had failed. On this last day I made another attempt.

In the afternoon I walked up and down before the large grotto where my captors were at work. Robur, standing at the entrance, followed me steadily with his eyes. Did he mean to address me?

I went up to him. "Captain," said I, "I have already asked you a question, which you have not answered. I ask it again: What do you intend to do with me?"

We stood face to face scarce two steps apart. With arms folded, he glared at me, and I was terrified by his glance. Terrified, that is the word! The glance was not that of a sane man. Indeed, it seemed to reflect nothing whatever of humanity within.

I repeated my question in a more challenging tone. For an instant I thought that Robur would break his silence and burst forth.

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"What do you intend to do with me? Will you set me free?"

Evidently my captor's mind was obsessed by some other thought, from which I had only distracted him for a moment. He made again that gesture which I had already observed; he raised one defiant arm toward the zenith. It seemed to me as if some irresistible force drew him toward those upper zones of the sky, that he belonged no more to the earth, that he was destined to live in space, a perpetual dweller in the clouds.

Without answering me, without seeming to have understood me, Robur re-entered the grotto.

How long this sojourn or rather relaxation of the "Terror" in the Great Eyrie was to last, I did not know. I saw, however, on the afternoon of this third of August that the repairs and the embarkation of stores were completed. The hold and lockers of our craft must have been completely crowded with the provisions taken from the grottoes of the Eyrie.

Then the chief of the two assistants, a man whom I now recognized as that John Turner who had been mate of the "Albatross," began another labor. With the help of his companion, he dragged to the center of the hollow all that remained of their materials, empty cases, fragments of carpentry, peculiar pieces of wood which clearly must have belonged to the "Albatross," which had been sacrificed to this new and mightier engine of locomotion. Beneath this mass there lay a great quantity of dried grasses. The thought came to me that Robur was preparing to leave this retreat forever!

In fact, he could not be ignorant that the attention of the public was now keenly fixed upon the Great Eyrie; and that some further attempt was likely to be made to penetrate it. Must he not fear that some day or other the effort would be successful, and that men would end by invading his hiding-place? Did he not wish that they should find there no single evidence of his occupation?

The sun disappeared behind the crests of the Blueridge. His rays now lighted only the very summit of Black Dome towering in the northwest. Probably the "Terror" awaited only the night in order to begin her flight. The world did not yet know that the automobile and boat could

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also transform itself into a flying machine. Until now, it had never been seen in the air. And would not this fourth transformation be carefully concealed, until the day when the Master of the World chose to put into execution his insensate menaces?

Toward nine o'clock profound obscurity enwrapped the hollow. Not a star looked down on us. Heavy clouds driven by a keen eastern wind covered the entire sky. The passage of the "Terror" would be invisible, not only in our immediate neighborhood, but probably across all the American territory and even the adjoining seas.

At this moment Turner, approaching the huge stack in the middle of the eyrie, set fire to the grass beneath.

The whole mass flared up at once. From the midst of a dense smoke, the roaring flames rose to a height which towered above the walls of the Great Eyrie. Once more the good folk of Morganton and Pleasant Garden would believe that the crater had reopened. These flames would announce to them another volcanic upheaval.

I watched the conflagration. I heard the roarings and cracklings which filled the air. From the deck of the "Terror," Robur watched it also.

Turner and his companion pushed back into the fire the fragments which the violence of the flames cast forth. Little by little the huge bonfire grew less. The flames sank down into a mere mass of burnt-out ashes; and once more all was silence and blackest night.

Suddenly I felt myself seized by the arm. Turner drew me toward the "Terror." Resistance would have been useless. And moreover what could be worse than to be abandoned without resources in this prison whose walls I could not climb!

As soon as I set foot on the deck, Turner also embarked. His companion went forward to the look-out; Turner climbed down into the engine-room, lighted by electric bulbs, from which not a gleam escaped outside.

Robur himself was at the helm, the regulator within reach of his hand, so that he could control both our speed and our direction. As to me, I was forced to descend into my cabin, and the hatchway was fastened above me. During that night, as on that of our departure from Niagara, I was not allowed to watch the movements of the "Terror."

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Nevertheless, if I could see nothing of what was passing on board, I could hear the noises of the machinery. I had first the feeling that our craft, its bow slightly raised, lost contact with the earth. Some swerves and balancings in the air followed. Then the turbines underneath spun with prodigious rapidity, while the great wings beat with steady regularity.

Thus the "Terror," probably forever, had left the Great Eyrie, and launched into the air as a ship launches into the waters. Our captain soared above the double chain of the Alleghanies, and without doubt he would remain in the upper zones of the air until he had left all the mountain region behind.

But in what direction would he turn? Would he pass in flight across the plains of North Carolina, seeking the Atlantic Ocean? Or would he head to the west to reach the Pacific? Perhaps he would seek, to the south, the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. When day came how should I recognize which sea we were upon, if the horizon of water and sky encircled us on every side?

Several hours passed; and how long they seemed to me! I made no effort to find forgetfulness in sleep. Wild and incoherent thoughts assailed me. I felt myself swept over worlds of imagination, as I was swept through space, by an aerial monster. At the speed which the "Terror" possessed, whither might I not be carried during this interminable night? I recalled the unbelievable voyage of the "Albatross," of which the Weldon Institute had published an account, as described by Mr. Prudent and Mr. Evans. What Robur, the Conqueror, had done with his first airship, he could do even more readily with this quadruple machine.

At length the first rays of daylight brightened my cabin. Would I be permitted to go out now, to take my place upon the deck, as I had done upon Lake Erie?

I pushed upon the hatchway: it opened. I came half way out upon the deck.

All about was sky and sea. We floated in the air above an ocean, at a height which I judged to be about a thousand or twelve hundred feet. I could not see Robur, so he was probably in the engine room. Turner was at the helm, his companion on the look-out.

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Now that I was upon the deck, I saw what I had not been able to see during our former nocturnal voyage, the action of those powerful wings which beat upon either side at the same time that the screws spun beneath the flanks of the machine.

By the position of the sun, as it slowly mounted from the horizon, I realized that we were advancing toward the south. Hence if this direction had not been changed during the night this was the Gulf of Mexico which lay beneath us.

A hot day was announced by the heavy livid clouds which clung to the horizon. These warnings of a coming storm did not escape the eye of Robur when toward eight o'clock he came on deck and took Turner's place at the helm. Perhaps the cloud-bank recalled to him the waterspout in which the "Albatross" had so nearly been destroyed, or the mighty cyclone from which he had escaped only as if by a miracle above the Antarctic Sea.

It is true that the forces of Nature which had been too strong for the Albatross, might easily be evaded by this lighter and more versatile machine. It could abandon the sky where the elements were in battle and descend to the surface of the sea; and if the waves beat against it there too heavily, it could always find calm in the tranquil depths.

Doubtless, however, there were some signs by which Robur, who must be experienced in judging, decided that the storm would not burst until the next day.

He continued his flight; and in the afternoon, when we settled down upon the surface of the sea, there was not a sign of bad weather. The Terror is a sea bird, an albatross or frigate-bird, which can rest at will upon the waves! Only we have this advantage, that fatigue has never any hold upon this metal organism, driven by the inexhaustible electricity!

The whole vast ocean around us was empty. Not a sail nor a trail of smoke was visible even on the limits of the horizon. Hence our passage through the clouds had not been seen and signaled ahead.

The afternoon was not marked by any incident. The Terror advanced at easy speed. What her captain intended to do, I could not guess. If he continued in this direction, we should reach some one of the West Indies, or beyond that, at the end of the Gulf, the shore of Ven-

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ezuela or Colombia. But when night came, perhaps we would again rise in the air to clear the mountainous barrier of Guatemala and Nicaragua, and take flight toward Island X, somewhere in the unknown regions of the Pacific.

Evening came. The sun sank in an horizon red as blood. The sea glistened around the Terror, which seemed to raise a shower of sparks in its passage. There was a storm at hand. Evidently our captain thought so. Instead of being allowed to remain on deck, I was compelled to re-enter my cabin, and the hatchway was closed above me.

In a few moments from the noises that followed, I knew that the machine was about to be submerged. In fact, five minutes later, we were moving peacefully forward through the ocean's depths.

Thoroughly worn out, less by fatigue than by excitement and anxious thought, I fell into a profound sleep, natural this time and not provoked by any soporific drug. When I awoke, after a length of time which I could not reckon, the Terror had not yet returned to the surface of the sea.

This maneuver was executed a little later. The daylight pierced my porthole; and at the same moment I felt the pitching and tossing to which we were subjected by a heavy sea.

I was allowed to take my place once more outside the hatchway; where my first thought was for the weather. A storm was approaching from the northwest. Vivid lightning darted amid the dense, black clouds. Already we could hear the rumbling of thunder echoing continuously through space. I was surprised—more than surprised, frightened!—by the rapidity with which the storm rushed upward toward the zenith. Scarcely would a ship have had time to furl her sails to escape the shock of the blast, before it was upon her! The advance was as swift as it was terrible.

Suddenly the wind was unchained with unheard of violence, as if it had suddenly burst from this prison of cloud. In an instant a frightful sea uprose. The breaking waves, foaming along all their crests, swept with their full weight over the Terror. If I had not been wedged solidly against the rail, I should have been swept overboard!

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There was but one thing to do—to change our machine again into a submarine. It would find security and calm at a few dozen feet beneath the surface. To continue to brave the fury of this outrageous sea was impossible.

Robur himself was on deck, and I awaited the order to return to my cabin—an order which was not given. There was not even any preparation for the plunge. With an eye more burning than ever, impassive before this frightful storm, the captain looked it full in the face, as if to defy it, knowing that he had nothing to fear.

It was imperative that the Terror should plunge below without losing a moment. Yet Robur seemed to have no thought of doing so. No! he preserved his haughty attitude as of a man who in his immeasurable pride, believed himself above or beyond humanity.

Seeing him thus I asked myself, with almost superstitious awe, if he were not indeed a demoniac being, escaped from some supernatural world.

A cry leaped from his mouth, and was heard amid the shrieks of the tempest and the howlings of the thunder. "I, Robur! Robur!—The Master of the World!"

He made a gesture which Turner and his companions understood. It was a command; and without any hesitation these unhappy men, insane as their master, obeyed it.

The great wings shot out, and the airship rose as it had risen above the falls of Niagara. But if on that day it had escaped the might of the cataract, this time it was amidst the might of the hurricane that we attempted our insensate flight.

The air-ship soared upward into the heart of the sky, amid a thousand lightning flashes, surrounded and shaken by the bursts of thunder. It steered amid the blinding, darting lights, courting destruction at every instant.

Robur's position and attitude did not change. With one hand on the helm, the other on the speed regulator, while the great wings beat furiously, he headed his machine toward the very center of the storm, where the electric flashes were leaping from cloud to cloud.

I must throw myself upon this madman to prevent him from driving his machine into the very middle of this aerial furnace! I must compel him to descend, to seek beneath the waters, a safety which was no longer possible either

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upon the surface of the sea or in the sky! Beneath, we could wait until this frightful outburst of the elements was at an end!

Then amid this wild excitement my own passions, all my instincts of duty, arose within me! Yes, this was madness! Yet must I not arrest this criminal whom my country had outlawed, who threatened the entire world with his terrible invention? Must I not put my hand on his shoulder and summon him to surrender to justice! Was I or was I not Strock, chief inspector of the federal police? Forgetting where I was, one against three, uplifted in mid-sky above a howling ocean, I leaped toward the stern, and in a voice which rose above the tempest, I cried as I hurled myself upon Robur:

"In the name of the law, I——"

Suddenly the Terror trembled as if from a violent shock. All her frame quivered, as the human frame quivers under the electric fluid. Struck by the lightning in the very middle of her powerful batteries, the air-ship spread out on all sides and went to pieces.

With her wings fallen, her screws broken, with bolt after bolt of the lightning darting amid her ruins, the Terror fell from the height of more than a thousand feet into the ocean beneath.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE OLD HOUSEKEEPER'S LAST COMMENT

WHEN I came to myself, after having been unconscious for many hours, a group of sailors whose care had restored me to life surrounded the door of a cabin in which I lay. By my pillow sat an officer who questioned me; and as my senses slowly returned, I answered to his questioning.

I told them everything. Yes, everything! And assuredly my listeners must have thought that they had upon their hands an unfortunate whose reason had not returned with his consciousness.

I was on board the steamer *Ottawa,* in the Gulf of Mexico, headed for the port of New Orleans. This ship, while flying before the same terrific thunder-storm which destroyed the Terror, had encountered some wreckage,

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among whose fragments was entangled my helpless body.

Thus I found myself back among humankind once more, while Robur the Conqueror and his two companions had ended their adventurous careers in the waters of the Gulf. The Master of the World had disappeared forever, struck down by those thunder-bolts which he had dared to brave in the regions of their fullest power. He carried with him the secret of his extraordinary machine.

Five days later the *Ottawa* sighted the shores of Louisiana; and on the morning of the tenth of August she reached her port. After taking a warm leave of my rescuers, I set out at once by train for Washington, which more than once I had despaired of ever seeing again.

I went first of all to the bureau of police, meaning to make my earliest appearance before Mr. Ward.

What was the surprise, the stupefaction, and also the joy of my chief, when the door of his cabinet opened before me! Had he not every reason to believe, from the report of my companions, that I had perished in the waters of Lake Erie?

I informed him of all my experiences since I had disappeared, the pursuit of the destroyers on the lake, the soaring of the Terror from amid Niagara Falls, the halt within the crater of the Great Eyrie, and the catastrophe, during the storm, above the Gulf of Mexico.

He learned for the first time that the machine created by the genius of this Robur, could traverse space, as it did the earth and the sea.

In truth, did not the possession of so complete and marvelous a machine justify the name of Master of the World, which Robur had taken to himself? Certain it is that the comfort and even the lives of the public must have been forever in danger from him; and that all methods of defence must have been feeble and ineffective.

But the pride which I had seen rising bit by bit within the heart of this prodigious man had driven him to give equal battle to the most terrible of all the elements. It was a miracle that I had escaped safe and sound from that frightful catastrophe.

Mr. Ward could scarcely believe my story. "Well, my dear Strock," said he at last, "you have come back; and that is the main thing. Next to this notorious Robur, you

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will be the man of the hour. I hope that your head will not be turned with vanity, like that of this crazy inventor!"

"No, Mr. Ward," I responded, "but you will agree with me that never was inquisitive man put to greater straits to satisfy his curiosity."

"I agree, Strock; and the mysteries of the Great Eyrie, the transformations of the Terror, you have discovered them! But unfortunately, the still greater secrets of this Master of the World have perished with him."

The same evening the newspapers published an account of my adventures, the truthfulness of which could not be doubted. Then, as Mr. Ward had prophesied, I was the man of the hour.

One of the papers said, "Thanks to Inspector Strock, the American police still lead the world. While others have accomplished their work, with more or less success, by land and by sea, the American police hurl themselves in pursuit of criminals through the depths of lakes and oceans and even through the sky."

Yet, in following, as I have told, in pursuit of the Terror, had I done anything more than by the close of the present century will have become the regular duty of my successors?

It is easy to imagine what a welcome my old housekeeper gave me when I entered my house in Long Street. When my apparition—does not the word seem just—stood before her, I feared for a moment she would drop dead, poor woman! Then, after hearing my story, with eyes streaming with tears, she thanked Providence for having saved me from so many perils.

"Now, sir," said she, "now—was I wrong?"

"Wrong? About what?"

"In saying that the Great Eyrie was the home of the devil?"

"Nonsense; this Robur was not the devil!"

"Ah, well!" replied the old woman, "he was worthy of being so!"

THE END.

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The Sphinx of Ice

OR

An Antarctic Mystery

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The Sphinx of Ice

CHAPTER I

AN OCEAN WAIF

NO doubt the following narrative will be received with entire incredulity, but I think it well that the public should be put in possession of the facts narrated in "An Antarctic Mystery." The public is free to believe them or not, at its good pleasure.

I am a Connecticut naturalist possessed of a small independent fortune. In the year 1839 I was engaged in research work among the islands of the far southern ocean. Chance brought me aboard the English trading brig *Halbrane,* whose captain, Len Guy, was at first most unwilling to receive me; for, as he most mysteriously declared, he could never tell to what region he might suddenly turn his ship. An accidental reference of mine to my favorite author Poe, suddenly roused Captain Guy's equal enthusiasm, and we became fast friends upon this common ground.

Not, however, till I had been two weeks upon his ship, did he more fully explain to me his strange interest in the great American author. Among Poe's most remarkable works is his tale of the Antarctic seas called "The Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym." I had always supposed the story to be pure fiction of the most fantastic sort; but Captain Len Guy assured me that it must be at least founded upon fact, for the sea-captain it described, William Guy, had been his own brother, who with his ship the *Jane* had disappeared in these waters about the time of Poe's narrative.

Briefly summarized, the narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym tells how Pym, after many disastrous adventures was left with only one companion, a half-breed Indian, Dirk Peters, as survivors on a shipwrecked bark. In their extermity they had even been driven to cannibalism, Dirk Peters having slain one unfortunate companion upon whom the death lot had fallen. Pym and the halfbreed were at last rescued by Captain William Guy and sailed with him

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into the far south. By some chance, fortunate or unfortunate, they found a gap in the great southern ice barrier which, surrounding the South Pole, usually bars all further advance at about 73° south. Piercing the ice barrier the bold explorers found an open sea, then a barren isle which they named Bennet Isle, and then a fairly fertile and populous island, called by its inhabitants, Tsalal.

At Tsalal, according to Pym's narrative, Captain Guy and his party were hospitably received, and taken to a rude city, Klock-Klock. After all suspicion had been allayed the Captain and most of his men were decoyed under an artificial landslide, and perished, while the ship, the *Jane*, assaulted by thousands of natives, blew up with all on board. The natives, seized with superstitious terror, then fled with a peculiar cry which they had always seemed to associate with some unspeakable threatening doom, "Tékéli-li! Tékéli-li."

Pym and Peters had been accidentally separated from their companions at the time of the disaster, and believing that they alone had escaped, they seized a native boat and carrying a terrified native with them, fled. The currents swept them still southward, amid scenes of mist and darkness and horror. Their captive, unable to stop them from advancing, died of sheer fright, crying "Tékéli-li!" The whole ocean seemed rushing southward, a cataract seemed opening in the deep, the boat clashed against an iceberg and Peters was hurled overboard. At the same moment Pym saw before him a huge sphinxlike figure, white, human, mountainous.

There the story ends. But Poe represents Pym and Peters as both having regained their American homes, where Pym communicated the tale to him and then suddenly mysteriously perished.

Now if this tale seems weird and startling even as fiction, imagine how it affected me anew when Captain Len Guy vouched for the accuracy of at least his brother's connection with it! Imagine how it must have affected my friend Guy. He told me that at once on reading it he had tried to reach Mr. Poe for further knowledge and had failed. Pym also he could get no trace of. Dirk Peters he followed to the halfbreed's Illinois home, only to learn that the man had indeed returned there, had talked vaguely of

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tragic experiences in the Antartic and then disappeared again. Whither, no man knew.

It was on the third of September that Captain Len Guy told me this strange tale; we were sliding smoothly over the surface of an undulating sea. The *Halbrane* resembled an enormous bird, one of the gigantic albatross kind described by Arthur Pym—which had spread its sail-like wings, and was carrying a whole ship's crew towards space.

James West, our capable lieutenant, was looking out through his glasses to starboard at an object floating two or three miles away, and several sailors, hanging over the side, were also curiously observing it.

I went forward and looked attentively at the object. It was an irregular formed mass about twelve yards in length, and in the middle of it there appeared a shining lump.

"That is no whale," said Martin Holt, the sailing-master. "It would have blown once or twice since we have been looking at it."

"Certainly!" assented Hurliguerly the boatswain. "Perhaps it is the carcase of some deserted ship."

"May the devil send it to the bottom!" cried Martin. "It would be a bad job to come up against it in the dark; it might send us down before we could know what had happened."

"What do you really think of it, boatswain?" I asked.

"It is my opinion, Mr. Jeorling." replied the boatswain, "that what we see there is neither a blower nor a wreck, but merely a lump of ice."

"Hurliguerly is right," said James West; "it is a lump of ice, a piece of an iceberg which the currents have carried hither."

"What?" said I, "to the forty-fifth parallel?"

"Yes, sir," answered West, "that has occurred, and the ice sometimes gets up as high as the Cape, if we are to take the word of a French navigator, Captain Blosseville, who met one at this height in 1828."

"Then this mass must melt before long," I observed, feeling not a little surprised that the usually silent West had honored me by so lengthy a reply.

"It must indeed be dissolved in great part already," he

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continued, "and what we see is the remains of a mountain of ice which must have weighed millions of tons."

Captain Len Guy now appeared, and perceiving the group of sailors around West, came forward. A few words were exchanged in a low tone between the captain and the lieutenant, and the latter passed his glass to the former, who turned it upon the floating object, now at least a mile nearer to us.

"It is ice," said he, "and it is lucky that it is dissolving! The *Halbrane* might have come to serious grief by collision with it in the night."

I was struck by the fixity of his gaze upon the object, whose nature he had so promptly declared: he continued to contemplate it for several minutes, and I guessed what was passing in the mind of the man under the obsession of a fixed idea. This fragment of ice, torn from the southern icebergs, came from those waters wherein his thoughts continually ranged. He wanted to see it more near, perhaps at close quarters, it might be to take away some bits of it. At an order from West the schooner was directed towards the floating mass; presently we were within two cables'-length, and I could examine it.

The mound in the center was melting rapidly; before the end of the day nothing would remain of the fragment of ice which had been carried by the currents so high up as the forty-fifth parallel.

Captain Len Guy gazed at it steadily, but he now needed no glass, and presently we all began to distinguish a second object which little by little detached itself from the mass, according as the melting process went on—a black shape, stretched on the white ice.

What was our surprise, mingled with horror, when we saw first an arm, then a leg, then a trunk, then a head appear, forming a human body, not in a state of nakedness, but clothed in dark garments. For a moment I even thought that the limbs moved, that the hands were stretched towards us.

The crew uttered a simultaneous cry. No! this body was not moving, but it was slowly slipping off the icy surface.

I looked at Captain Len Guy. His face was as livid as that of the corpse that had drifted down from the far lati-

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tudes of the austral zone. What could be done was done to recover the body of the unfortunate man, and who can tell whether a faint breath of life did not animate it even then? In any case his pockets might perhaps contain some document that would enable his identity to be established. Then, accompanied by a last prayer, those human remains should be committed to the depths of the ocean, the cemetery of sailors who die at sea.

A boat was let down. I followed it with my eyes as it neared the side of the ice fragment eaten by the waves.

Hurliguerly set foot upon a spot which still offered some resistance. He crept along the ice until he reached the corpse, then drew it to him by the arms and legs and so got it into the boat. A few strokes of the oars and the boatswain had rejoined the schooner. The corpse, completely frozen, having been laid at the foot of the mizzen mast, Captain Len Guy approached and examined it long and closely, as though he sought to recognize it.

It was the corpse of a sailor, dressed in coarse stuff, woolen trousers and a patched jersey; a belt encircled his waist twice. His death had evidently occurred some months previously, probably very soon after the unfortunate man had been carried away by the drift. He was about forty, with slightly grizzled hair, a mere skeleton covered with skin. He must have suffered agonies of hunger.

Captain Len Guy lifted up the hair, which had been preserved by the cold, raised the head, gazed upon the scaled eyelids, and finally said with a sort of sob:

"Patterson! Patterson!"

"Patterson?" I exclaimed.

The name, common as it was, touched some chord in my memory. When had I heard it uttered? Had I read it anywhere?

At this moment, James West, on a hint from the boatswain, searched the pockets of the dead man, and took out of them a knife, some string, an empty tobacco box, and lastly a leather pocket-book furnished with a metallic pencil.

"Give me that," said the captain. Some of the leaves were covered with writing, almost entirely effaced by the damp. He found, however, some words on the last page

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which were still legible, and my emotion may be imagined when I heard him read aloud in a trembling voice: "The *Jane* . . . Tsalal island . . . by eighty-three . . . There . . . eleven years . . . captain . . . five sailors surviving . . . Hasten to bring them aid."

And under these lines was a name, a signature, the name of Patterson!

Then I remembered! Patterson was the second officer of the *Jane,* the mate of the schooner which had picked up Arthur Pym and Dirk Peters on the wreck of the *Grampus,* the *Jane* which reached Tsalal Island; the *Jane* which was attacked by natives and blown up in the midst of those waters.

So then it was all true? Edgar Poe's work was that of an historian, not a writer of romance? Arthur Gordon Pym's journal had actually been confided to him! Direct relations had been established between them! Arthur Pym existed, or rather he had existed, he was a real being! And he had died, by a sudden and deplorable death under circumstances not revealed before he had completed the narrative of his extraordinary voyage! And what parallel had he reached on leaving Tsalal Island with his companion, Dirk Peters, and how had both of them been restored to their native land, America?

I thought my head was turning, that I was going mad—I who had almost accused Captain Guy of being insane! No! I had not heard aright! I had misunderstood! This was a mere phantom of my fancy!

And yet, how was I to reject the evidence found on the body of the mate of the *Jane,* that Patterson whose words were supported by ascertained dates? And above all, how could I retain a doubt, after James West, who was the most self-possessed amongst us, had succeeded in deciphering the following fragments of sentences:

"Drifting since the 3rd of June north of Tsalal Island. . . . Still there . . . Captain William Guy and five of the men of the *Jane*—the piece of ice I am on is drifting across the iceberg . . . food will soon fail me. . . . Since the 13th of June . . . my last resources exhausted . . . to-day . . . 16th of June . . . I am going to die."

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So then for nearly three months Patterson's body had lain on the surface of this ice-waif which we had met on our way from the Kerguelens to Tristan d'Acunha! Ah! why had we not saved the mate of the *Jane!*

I had to yield to evidence. Captain Len Guy, who knew Patterson, had recognized him in this frozen corpse! Yes! for eleven years, the survivors of the English schooner had been cast away there without any hope of succor.

Len Guy turned to me and said, "Do you believe—*now?*"

"I believe," said I, falteringly.

Then we turned our eyes once more to the place where the lump of ice had been floating; but the double influence of the solar rays and the waters in this latitude had produced its effect, no trace of the dead man's last refuge remained on the surface of the sea.

CHAPTER II

TO THE POLAR CIRCLE

AND now, what was Captain Len Guy going to do? There was not a shadow of doubt on that point. He would take the *Halbrane* to Tsalal Island, as marked upon Patterson's note-book. His lieutenant, James West, would go whithersoever he was ordered to go; his crew would not hesitate to follow him, and would not be stopped by any fear of passing the limits assigned to human power, for the soul of their captain and the strength of their lieutenant would be in them.

This, then, was the reason why Captain Len Guy refused to take passengers on board his ship, and why he had told me that his routes never were certain; he was always hoping that an opportunity for venturing into the sea of ice might arise.

"I wish to ask you, Mr. Jeorling," said he upon the first opportunity, "whether you think everything in Arthur Pym's journal, which has been published by Edgar Poe, is exactly true?"

"I think there is some need for doubt," I answered; "the singular character of the hero of those adventures being taken into consideration—at least concerning the

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phenomena of the island of Tsalal. And we know that Arthur Pym was mistaken in asserting that Captain William Guy and several of his companions perished in the landslide of the hill at Klock-Klock."

"Ah! but he does not assert this, Mr. Jeorling! He says only that, when he and Dirk Peters had reached the opening through which they could discern the surrounding country, the seat of the artificial earthquake was revealed to them. Now, as the whole face of the hill was rushing into the ravine, the fate of my brother and twenty-nine of his men could not be doubtful to his mind. He was, most naturally, led to believe that Dirk Peters and himself were the only white men remaining alive on the island. He said nothing but this—nothing more. These were only suppositions—very reasonable, are they not?"

"I admit that, fully, captain."

"But now, thanks to Patterson's note-book, we are certain that my brother and five of his companions escaped from the landslide contrived by the natives."

"That is quite clear, captain. But, as to what became of the survivors of the *Jane*, whether they were taken by the natives of Tsalal and kept in captivity, or remained free, Patterson's note-book says nothing, nor does it relate under what circumstances he himself was carried far away from them."

"All that we shall learn, Mr. Jeorling. Yes, we shall know all. The main point is that we are quite sure my brother and five of his sailors were living less than four months ago on some part of Tsalal Island. There is now no question of a romance signed 'Edgar Poe,' but of a veracious narrative signed 'Patterson.'"

"Captain," said I, "will you let me be one of your company until the end of the campaign of the *Halbrane* in the Antarctic seas?"

Captain Len Guy looked at me with a glance as penetrating as a keen blade. Otherwise he did not appear surprised by the proposal I had made; perhaps he had been expecting it—and he uttered only the single word:

"Willingly."

Extra hands were necessary for so bold a venture, as the savages of Tsalal must perhaps be fought. These we gathered at Port Egmond in the Falkland Isles. Our

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original number all told had been thirteen, the captain, his able lieutenant James West, the shrewd gossipy boatswain Hurliguerly, Martin Holt the sailing master, Endicott the colored cook, and seven trusty seamen. Now we added twenty more, bold spirits attracted by our story and the offer of double pay to penetrate to the unknown Tsalal.

Provisions and stores were put aboard to last if need be for two years. As to the expense I arranged with Captain Guy that I was to be an equal partner in the cost and in the possible profits of the voyage.

Of the new men, able as they all were, only two need special notice. Hearne a harpooner, a rough violent man but a noted hunter of whales and seals, was one. The other was a strange, silent fellow called Hunt who appeared aboard the night before our leaving, and fairly insisted upon joining us.

This Hunt was a man of short stature, his weather-beaten face was brick red, his skin of a yellowish-brown like an Indian's, his body clumsy, his head very large, his legs were bowed, his whole frame denoted exceptional strength, especially the arms, which terminated in huge hands. His grizzled hair resembled a kind of fur.

A particular and anything but prepossessing character was imparted to his physiognomy by the extraordinary keenness of his small eyes, his almost lipless mouth, which stretched from ear to ear, and his long teeth, which were dazzlingly white; their enamel being intact, for he had never been attacked by scurvy, the common scourge of seamen in high latitudes.

Hunt had been living in the Falklands for three years; he lived alone on a pension, no one knew from whence this was derived. He was singularly uncommunicative, and passed his time in fishing, by which he might have lived, not only as a matter of sustenance, but as an article of commerce.

The information gained by Captain Len Guy was necessarily incomplete, as it was confined to Hunt's conduct during his residence at Port Egmont. The man did not fight, he did not drink, and he had given many proofs of his Herculean strength. Concerning his past nothing was known, but undoubtedly he had been a sailor. He said more to Len Guy than he had ever said to anybody at

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Falkland; but he kept silence respecting the family to which he belonged, and the place of his birth. This was of no importance; that he should prove to be a good sailor was all we had to think about.

From the Falklands, we proceeded to the South Orkney Islands. And thence, on the 26th of November, 1839, we headed south along the forty-third meridian in the Atlantic. This route it was that the explorer Weddell and then William Guy had followed, and, provided the schooner did not deflect either to the east or the west, she must inevitably come to Tsalal Island. The difficulties of navigation had to be taken into account, of course.

The wind, continuing to blow steadily from the west, was in our favor, and if the present speed of the *Halbrane* could be maintained, as I ventured to suggest to Captain Len Guy, the voyage from the South Orkneys to the Polar Circle would be a short one. Beyond, as I knew, we should have to force the gate of the thick barrier of icebergs, or to discover a breach in that ice-fortress.

"So that, in less than a month, captain——" I suggested, tentatively.

"In less than a month I hope to have found the iceless sea which Weddell and Arthur Pym describe so fully, beyond the ice-wall, and thenceforth we need only sail on under ordinary conditions to Bennet Island in the first place, and afterwards to Tsalal Island. Once on that 'wide open sea,' what obstacle could arrest or even retard our progress?"

"I can foresee none, captain, so soon as we shall get to the back of the ice-wall. The passage through is the difficult point; it must be our chief source of anxiety, and if only the wind holds——"

"It will hold, Mr. Jeorling. All the navigators of the austral seas have been able to ascertain, as I myself have done, the permanence of this wind."

"That is true, and I rejoice in the assurance, captain. Besides, I acknowledge, without shrinking from the admission, that I am beginning to be superstitious."

"And why not, Mr. Jeorling? What is there unreasonable in admitting the intervention of a supernatural power in the most ordinary circumstances of life? And we, who sail the *Halbrane,* should we venture to doubt it?

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Recall to your mind our meeting with the unfortunate Patterson on our ship's course, the fragment of ice carried into the waters where we were, and dissolved immediately afterwards. Were not these facts providential? Nay, I go farther still, and am sure that, after having done so much to guide us towards our compatriots, God will not abandon us——"

"I think as you think, captain. No, His intervention is not to be denied, and I do not believe that chance plays the part assigned to it by superficial minds upon the stage of human life. All the facts are united by a mysterious chain."

"A chain, Mr. Jeorling, whose first link, so far as we are concerned, is Patterson's ice-block, and whose last will be Tsalal Island. Ah! My brother! my poor brother! Left there for eleven years, with his companions in misery, without being able to entertain the hope that succor ever could reach them! And Patterson carried far away from them, under we know not what conditions, they not knowing what had become of him! If my heart is sick when I think of these catastrophes, Mr. Jeorling, at least it will not fail me unless it be at the moment when my brother throws himself into my arms."

So then we two were agreed in our trust in Providence. It had been made plain to us in a manifest fashion that God had entrusted us with a mission, and we would do all that might be humanly possible to accomplish it.

The schooner's crew, I ought to mention, were animated by the like sentiments, and shared the same hopes. I allude to the original seamen who were so devoted to their captain. As for the new ones, they were probably indifferent to the result of the enterprise, provided it should secure the profits promised to them by their engagement.

At least, I was assured by the boatswain that such was the case, but with the exception of Hunt. This man had apparently not been induced to take service by the bribe of high wages or prize money. He was absolutely silent on that and every other subject.

"If he does not speak to you, boatswain," I said, "neither does he speak to me."

"Do you know, Mr. Jeorling, what it is my notion that man has already done?"

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"Tell me, Hurliguerly."

"Well, then, I believe he has gone far, far into the southern seas, let him be as dumb as a fish about it. Why he *is* dumb is his own affair. But if that sea-hog of a man has not been inside the Antarctic Circle and even the ice wall by a good dozen degrees, may the first sea we ship carry me overboard."

"From what do you judge, boatswain?"

"From his eyes, Mr. Jeorling, from his eyes. No matter at what moment, let the ship's head be as it may, those eyes of his are always on the south, open, unwinking, fixed like guns in position."

Hurliguerly did not exaggerate, and I had already remarked this. To employ an expression of Edgar Poe's, Hunt had eyes like a falcon's.

"When he is not on the watch," resumed the boatswain, "that savage leans all the time with his elbows on the side, as motionless as he is mute. His right place would be at the end of our bow, where he would do for a figure-head to the *Halbrane,* and a very ugly one at that! And then, when he is at the helm, Mr. Jeorling, just observe him! His enormous hands clutch the handles as though they were fastened to the wheel; he gazes at the binnacle as though the magnet of the compass were drawing his eyes. I pride myself on being a good steersman, but as for being the equal of Hunt, I'm not! With him, not for an instant does the needle vary from the sailing-line, however rough a lurch she may give. I am sure that if the binnacle lamp were to go out in the night Hunt would not require to relight it. The fire in his eyes would light up the dial and keep him right."

For several days our navigation went on in unbroken monotony, without a single incident, and under favorable conditions. The spring season was advancing, and whales began to make their appearance in large numbers. In these waters a week would suffice for ships of heavy tonnage to fill their casks with the precious oil. Thus the new men of the crew, and especially the Americans, did not conceal their regret for the captain's indifference in the presence of so many animals worth their weight in gold, and more abundant than they had ever seen whales at that period of the year. The leading malcontent was

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Hearne, the sealing-master, to whom his companions were ready to listen. He had found it easy to get the upper hand of the other sailors by his rough manner and the surly audacity that was expressed by his whole personality. Hearne was an American, and forty-five years of age. He was an active, vigorous man, and I could see him in my mind's eye, standing up on his double bowed whaling-boat brandishing the harpoon, darting it into the flank of a whale, and paying out the rope. He must have been fine to see. Granted his passion for this business, I could not be surprised that his discontent showed itself upon occasion.

In any case, however, our schooner was not fitted out for fishing, and the implements of whaling were not on board.

One day, about three o'clock in the afternoon, I had gone forward to watch the gambols of a "school" of the huge sea mammals. Hearne was pointing them out to his companions, and muttering in disjoined phrases:

"There, look there! That's a fin-back! There's another, and another; three of them with their dorsal fins five or six feet high. Just see them swimming between two waves, quietly, making no jumps. Ah! if I had a harpoon, I bet my head that I could send it into one of the four yellow spots they have on their bodies. But there's nothing to be done in this traffic-box; one cannot stretch one's arms. Devil take it! In these seas it is fishing we ought to be at, not——"

"Hearne," said West's imperious voice, "go up to the maintop. You will be more at your ease there to reckon the whales."

"But, sir——"

"No reply, or I'll keep you up there until to-morrow. Come—be off at once."

And as he would have got the worst of an attempt at resistance, the sealing-master obeyed in silence.

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CHAPTER III
TO THE ICE WALL

SINCE the *Halbrane* has passed beyond the imaginary curve drawn at twenty-three and a half degrees from the Pole, it seems as though she had entered a new region, "that region of Desolation and Silence," as Edgar Poe says; that magic essence of splendor and glory in which the *Eleanora's* singer longed to be shut up to all eternity; that immense ocean of light ineffable.

It is my belief—to return to less fanciful hypotheses—that the Antarctic region, with a superficies of more than five millions of square miles, has remained what our spheroid was during the glacial period. In the summer, the southern zone, as we all know, enjoys perpetual day, owing to the rays projected by the orb of light above its horizon in his spiral ascent. Then, so soon as he has disappeared, the long night sets in, a night which is frequently illumined by the polar aurora or Northern Lights.

It was then in the season of light that our schooner was about to sail in these formidable regions. The permanent brightness would not fail us before we should have reached Tsalal Island, where we felt no doubt of finding the men of the *Jane*.

When Captain Len Guy, West, and the old sailors of the crew learned that the schooner had cleared the sixty-sixth parallel of latitude, their rough and sunburnt faces shone with satisfaction. The temperature had fallen rapidly, and hail, rain, and snow thickened and darkened the air. At ten o'clock in the evening—I must use this word, although the sun remained always above the horizon—the tempest increased, and the captain and his lieutenant, almost unable to hear other's voices amid the elemental strife, communicated mostly by gestures, which is as good a mode as speech between sailors.

I could not make up my mind to retire to my cabin, and, seeking the shelter of the roundhouse, I remained on deck, observing the weather phenomena, and the skill, certainty, celerity, and effect with which the crew carried out the orders of the captain and West. It was a strange and terrible experience for a landsman, even one who had seen so much of the sea and seamanship as I had. At the moment of a certain difficult maneuver, four men had to

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climb to the crossbars of the fore-mast in order to reef the mainsail. The first who sprang to the ratlines was Hunt. The second was Martin Holt. I could not have believed that any man could display such skill and agility as Hunt. His hands and feet hardly caught the ratlines. Having reached the crossbars first, he stretched himself on the ropes to the end of the yard, while Holt went to the other end, and the two recruits remained in the middle.

While the men were working, and the tempest was raging round us, a terrific lurch of the ship to starboard under the stroke of a mountainous wave, flung everything on the deck into wild confusion, and the sea rushed in through the scupper-holes. I was knocked down, and for some moments was unable to rise.

So great had been the incline of the schooner that the end of the yard of the mainsail was plunged three or four feet into the crest of a wave. When it emerged Martin Holt, who had been astride on it, had disappeared. A cry was heard, uttered by the sailing-master, whose arm could be seen wildly waving amid the whiteness of the foam. The sailors rushed to the side and flung out one a rope, another a cask, a third a spar—in short, any object of which Martin Holt might lay hold. At the moment when I struggled up to my feet I caught sight of a massive substance which cleft the air and vanished in the whirl of the waves.

Was this a second accident? No! it was a voluntary action, a deed of self-sacrifice. Having finished his task, Hunt had thrown himself into the sea, that he might save Martin Holt.

"Two men overboard!"

Yes, two—one to save the other. And were they not about to perish together?

The two heads rose to the foaming surface of the water. Hunt was swimming vigorously, cutting through the waves, and was nearing Martin Holt.

"They are lost! both lost!" exclaimed the captain, "The boat, West, the boat!"

"If you give the order to lower it," answered West, "I will be the first to get into it, although at the risk of my life. But I must have the order."

In unspeakable suspense the ship's crew and myself had

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witnessed this scene. None thought of the position of the *Halbrane,* which was sufficiently dangerous; all eyes were fixed upon the terrible waves. Now fresh cries, the frantic cheers of the crew, rose above the roar of the elements. Hunt had reached the drowning man just as he sank out of sight, had seized hold of him, and was supporting him with his left arm, while Holt, incapable of movement, swayed helplessly about like a reed. With the other arm Hunt was swimming bravely and making way towards the schooner.

A minute, which seemed endless, passed. The two men, the one dragging the other, were hardly to be distinguished in the midst of the surging waves.

At last Hunt reached the schooner, and caught one of the lines hanging over the side.

In a minute Hunt and Martin Holt were hoisted on board; the latter was laid down at the foot of the foremast, and the former was quite ready to go to his work. Holt was speedily restored by the aid of vigorous rubbing; his senses came back, and he opened his eyes.

"Martin Holt," said Captain Len Guy, who was leaning over him, "you have been brought back from very far——"

"Yes, yes, captain," answered Holt, as he looked about him with searching gaze, "but who saved me?"

"Hunt," cried the boatswain, "Hunt risked his life for you."

As the latter was hanging back, Hurliguerly pushed him towards Martin Holt, whose eyes expressed the liveliest gratitude. "Hunt," said he, "you have saved me. But for you I should have been lost. I thank you."

Hunt made no reply. "Hunt," resumed Captain Guy, "don't you hear?"

The man seemed not to have heard.

"Hunt," said Martin Holt again, "come near to me. I thank you. I want to shake hands with you."

And he held out his right hand. Hunt stepped back a few paces, shaking his head with the air of a man who did not want so many compliments for a thing so simple, and quietly walked forward to join his shipmates, who were working vigorously under the orders of West.

Decidedly, this man was a hero in courage and self-

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devotion; but equally decidedly he was a being impervious to impressions, and not on that day either was the boatswain destined to know "the color of his words!"

For three whole days, the 6th, 7th, and 8th of December, the tempest raged in these waters, accompanied by snow storms which perceptibly lowered the temperature. It is needless to say that Captain Len Guy proved himself a true seaman, that James West had an eye to everything, that the crew seconded them loyally, and that Hunt was always foremost when there was work to be done or danger to be incurred.

In truth, I do not know how to give an idea of this man! What a difference there was between him and most of the sailors recruited at the Falklands, and especially between him and Hearne, the sealing-master! They obeyed, no doubt, for such a master as James West gets himself obeyed, whether with a good or ill will. But behind backs what complaints were made, what recriminations were exchanged! All this, I feared, was of evil presage for the future.

Martin Holt had been able to resume his duties very soon, and he fulfilled them with hearty good-will. He knew the business of a sailor right well, and was the only man on board who could compete with Hunt in handiness and zeal.

"Well, Holt," said I to him one day when he was talking with the boatswain, "what terms are you on with that queer fellow Hunt now? Since the salvage affair, is he a little more communicative?"

"No, Mr. Jeorling, and I think he even tries to avoid me."

"To avoid you?"

"Well, he did so before, for that matter."

"Yes, indeed, that is true," added Hurliguerly; "I have made the same remark more than once."

"Then he keeps aloof from you, Holt, as from the others?"

"From me more than from the others."

"What is the meaning of that?

"I don't know, Mr. Jeorling."

I was surprised at what the two men had said, but a little observation convinced me that Hunt actually did avoid

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every occasion of coming in contact with Martin Holt. Did he not think that he had a right to Holt's gratitude although the latter owed his life to him? This man's conduct was certainly very strange.

In the early morning of the 9th the wind showed a tendency to change in the direction of the east, which would mean more manageable weather for us. And, in fact, although the sea still remained rough, at about two in the morning it became feasible to put on more sail without risk, and thus the *Halbrane* regained the course from which she had been driven by the prolonged tempest.

In that portion of the Antarctic sea the ice-packs were more numerous, and there was reason to believe that the tempest, by hastening the smash-up, had broken the barrier of the iceberg wall towards the east.

On the morning of December 17th the man in the crow's-nest at last signaled the ice barrier. Five or six miles to the south a long dentated crest upreared itself, plainly standing out against the fairly clear sky, and all along it drifted thousands of ice-packs. This motionless barrier stretched before us from the northwest to the southeast, and by merely sailing along it the schooner would still gain some degrees southwards.

When the *Halbrane* was within three miles of the icebergs, she lay-to in the middle of a wide basin which allowed her complete freedom of movement.

A boat was lowered, and Captain Len Guy got into it, with the boatswain, four sailors at the oars, and one at the helm. The boat was pulled in the direction of the enormous rampart, vain search was made for a channel through which the schooner could have slipped, and after three hours of this fatiguing reconnoitering, the men returned to the ship. Then came a squall of rain and snow which caused the temperature to fall to thirty-six degrees (2.22 Centigrade), and shut out the view of the ice-rampart from us.

During the next twenty-four hours the schooner lay within four miles of the icebergs. To bring her nearer would have been to get among winding channels from which it might not have been possible to extricate her. Not that Captain Len Guy did not long to do this, in his fear of passing some opening unperceived.

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"If I had a consort," he said, "I would sail closer along the icebergs, and it is a great advantage to be two, when one is on such an enterprise as this! But the *Halbrane* is alone, and if she were to fail us——"

Even though we approached no nearer to the icebergs than prudence permitted, our ship was exposed to great risk, and West was constantly obliged to change his trim in order to avoid the shock of an icefield.

Fortunately, the wind blew from east to north-nor'east without variation, and it did not freshen. Had a tempest arisen I know not what would have become of the schooner—yes, though, I do know too well; she would have been lost and all on board of her. In such a case the *Halbrane* could not have escaped; we must have been flung on the base of the barrier.

After a long examination Captain Len Guy had to renounce the hope of finding a passage through the terrible wall of ice. It remained only to endeavor to reach the southeast point of it. At any rate, by following that course we lost nothing in latitude; and, in fact, on the 18th the observation taken made the seventy-third parallel the position of the *Halbrane*.

I must repeat, however, that navigation in the Antarctic seas will probably never be accomplished under more felicitous circumstances—the precocity of the summer season, the permanence of the north wind, the temperature forty-nine degrees at the lowest; all this was the best of good-fortune. I need not add that we enjoyed perpetual light, and the whole twenty-four hours round the sun's rays reached us from every point of the horizon.

Two or three times the captain approached within two miles of the icebergs. It was impossible but that the vast mass must have been subjected to climatic influences; ruptures must surely have taken place at some points.

But his search had no result, and we had to fall back into the current from west to east.

I must observe at this point that during all our search we never descried land or the appearance of land out at sea, as indicated on the charts of preceding navigators. These maps are incomplete, no doubt, but sufficiently exact in their main lines. I am aware that ships have often passed over the indicated bearings of land. This, how-

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ever, was not admissible in the case of Tsalal. If the *Jane* had been able to reach the islands, it was because that portion of the Antarctic sea was free, and in so "early" a year, we need not fear any obstacle in that direction.

At last, on the 19th, between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, a shout from the crow's-nest was heard.

"What is it?" roared West.

"The iceberg wall is split on the southeast."

"What is beyond?"

"Nothing in sight."

It took West very little time to reach the point of observation, and we all waited below, how impatiently may be imagined. What if the look-out were mistaken, if some optical delusion?—But West, at all events, would make no mistake.

After ten interminable minutes his clear voice reached us on deck. "Open sea!" he cried.

Unanimous cheers made answer. The schooner was put to the southeast, hugging the wind as much as possible.

Two hours later we had doubled the extremity of the ice-barrier, and there lay before our eyes a sparkling sea, entirely open.

CHAPTER IV

A VOICE IN A DREAM

ENTIRELY free from ice? No. It would have been premature to affirm this as a fact. A few icebergs were visible in the distance, while some drifts and packs were still going east. Nevertheless, the break-up had been very thorough on that side, and the sea was in reality open, since a ship could sail freely.

"God has come to our aid," said Captain Len Guy. "May He be pleased to guide us to the end."

"In a week," I remarked, "our schooner might come in sight of Tsalal Island."

"Provided that the east wind lasts, Mr. Jeorling. Don't forget that in sailing along the icebergs to their eastern extremity, the *Halbrane* went out of her course, and she must be brought back towards the west."

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"The breeze is for us, captain."

"And we shall profit by it, for my intention is to make for Bennet Islet. It was there that my brother first landed, and so soon as we shall have sighted that island we shall be certain that we are on the right route. To-day, when I have ascertained our position exactly, we shall steer for Bennet Islet."

"Who knows but that we may come upon some fresh sign?"

"It is not impossible, Mr. Jeorling."

I need not say that recourse was had to the surest guide within our reach, that veracious narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, which I read and re-read with intense attention, fascinated as I was by the idea that I might be permitted to behold with my own eyes those strange phenomena of nature in the Antarctic world which I, in common with all Edgar Poe's readers, had hitherto regarded as creations of the most imaginative writer who ever gave voice by his pen to the phantasies of a unique brain. No doubt a great part of the wonders of Arthur Gordon Pym's narrative would prove pure fiction, but if even a little of the marvelous story were found to be true, how great a privilege would be mine!

The picturesque and wonderful side of the story we were studying as gospel truth had little charm and but slight interest for Captain Len Guy; he was indifferent to everything in Pym's narrative that did not relate directly to the castaways of Tsalal Island; his mind was solely and constantly set upon their rescue.

According to the narrative of Arthur Pym, the *Jane* experienced serious difficulties, due to bad weather, from the 1st to the 4th of January, 1828. It was not until the morning of the 5th, in latitude 73° 15′, that she found a free passage through the last iceberg that barred her way. The final difference between our position and the *Jane* in a parallel case, was that the *Jane* took fifteen days to accomplish the distance of ten degrees, or six hundred miles, which separated her on the 5th of January from Tsalal Island, while on the 19th of December the *Halbrane* was only about seven degrees, or four hundred miles, off the island. Bennet Islet, where Captain Guy intended to put in for twenty-four hours, was fifty miles nearer. Our voyage

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was progressing under prosperous conditions; we were no longer visited by sudden hail and snow storms, or those rapid falls of temperature which tried the crew of the *Jane* so sorely.

During the night, or rather what ought to have been the night of the 19th-20th, my sleep was disturbed by a strange dream. Yes! there could be no doubt but that it was only a dream! Nevertheless, I think it well to record it here, because it is an additional testimony to the haunting influence under which my brain was beginning to labor.

I was sleeping—at two hours after midnight—and was awakened by a plaintive and continuous murmuring sound. I opened—or I imagined I opened my eyes. My cabin was in profound darkness. The murmur began again; I listened, and it seemed to me that a voice—a voice which I did not know—whispered these words:

"Pym . . . Pym . . poor Pym!"

Evidently this could only be a delusion; unless, indeed, some one had got into my cabin: the door was not locked. "Pym!" the voice repeated. "Poor Pym never must be forgotten."

This time the words were spoken close to my ear. What was the meaning of the injunction, and why was it addressed to me? And besides, had not Pym, after his return to America, met with a sudden and deplorable death, the circumstances or the details being unknown?

I began to doubt whether I was in my right mind, and shook myself into complete wakefulness, recognizing that I had been disturbed by an extremely vivid dream due to some cerebral cause.

I turned out of my berth, and, pushing back the shutter, looked out of my cabin. No one aft on the deck, except Hunt, who was at the helm.

I had nothing to do but to lie down again, and this I did. It seemed to me that the name of Arthur Pym was repeated in my hearing several times; nevertheless, I fell asleep and did not wake until morning, when I retained only a vague impression of this occurrence, which soon faded away. No other incident at that period of our voyage calls for notice. Nothing particular occurred on board our schooner. The breeze from the north, which had forsaken us, did not recur, and only the current carried the

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Halbrane towards the south. This caused a delay unbearable to our impatience.

At last, on the 21st, the usual observation gave 82° 50′ of latitude, and 42° 20′ of west longitude. Bennet Islet, if it had any existence, could not be far off now.

Yes! the islet did exist, and its bearings were those indicated by Arthur Pym. At six o'clock in the evening one of the crew cried out that there was land ahead.

CHAPTER V.

BENNET ISLET

THE *Halbrane* was then within sight of Bennet Islet! The crew urgently needed rest, so the disembarkation was deferred until the following day, and I went back to my cabin.

The night passed without disturbance, and when day came not a craft of any kind was visible on the waters, not a native on the beach. There were no huts upon the coast, no smoke arose in the distance to indicate that Bennet Islet was inhabited. But William Guy had not found any trace of human beings there, and what I saw of the islet answered to the description given by Arthur Pym. It rose upon a rocky base of about a league in circumference, and was so arid that no vegetation existed on its surface.

"Mr. Jeorling," said Captain Len Guy, "do you observe a promontory in the direction of the northeast?"

"I observe it, captain."

"Is it not formed of heaped-up rocks which look like giant bales of cotton?"

"That is so, and just what the narrative describes."

"Then all we have to do is to land on the promontory, Mr. Jeorling. Who knows but we may come across some vestige of the crew of the *Jane*, supposing them to have succeeded in escaping from Tsalal Island."

The speaker was devouring the islet with his eyes. What must his thoughts, his desires, his impatience have been! But there was a man whose gaze was set upon the same point even more fixedly; that man was Hunt.

Before we left the *Halbrane* Len Guy enjoined the most

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minute and careful watchfulness upon his lieutenant. This was a charge which West did not need. Our exploration would take only half a day at most. If the boat had not returned in the afternoon a second was to be sent in search of us.

"Look sharp also after our recruits," added the captain.

"Don't be uneasy, captain," replied the lieutenant. "Indeed, since you want four men at the oars you had better take them from among the new ones. That will leave four less troublesome fellows on board."

This was a good idea, for, under the deplorable influence of Hearne, the discontent of his shipmates from the Falklands was now on the increase. The boat being ready, four of the new crew took their places forward, while Hunt, at his own request, was steersman. Captain Len Guy, the boatswain and myself, all well armed, seated ourselves aft, and we started for the northern point of the islet. In the course of an hour we had doubled the promontory, and come in sight of the little bay whose shores the boats of the *Jane* had touched.

Hunt steered for this bay, gliding with remarkable skill between the rocky points which stuck up here and there. One would have certainly thought he knew his way among them.

We disembarked on a stony coast. The stones were covered with sparse lichen. The tide was already ebbing, leaving uncovered the sandy bottom of a sort of beach strewn with black rocks, resembling big nail-heads.

Two men were left in charge of the boat while we landed amid the rocks, and, accompanied by the other two, Captain Len Guy, the boatswain, Hunt and I proceed towards the center, where we found some rising ground, from whence we could see the whole extent of the islet. But there was nothing to be seen on any side, absolutely nothing. On coming down from the slight eminence Hunt went on in front, as it had been agreed that he was to be our guide. We followed him therefore, as he led us towards the southern extremity of the islet. Having reached the point, Hunt looked carefully on all sides of him, then stooped and showed us a piece of half rotten wood lying among the scattered stones.

"I remember!" I exclaimed; "Arthur Pym speaks of

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a piece of wood with traces of carving on it which appeared to have belonged to the bow of a ship."

"Among the carving my brother fancied he could trace the design of a tortoise," added Captain Len Guy.

"Just so," I replied, "but Arthur Pym pronounced that resemblance doubtful. No matter; the piece of wood is still in the same place that is indicated in the narrative, so we may conclude that since the *Jane* cast anchor here no other crew has ever set foot upon Bennet Islet. It follows that we should only lose time in looking out for any tokens of another landing. We shall know nothing until we reach Tsalal Island."

"Yes, Tsalal Island," replied the captain.

We then retraced our steps in the direction of the bay. In various places we observed fragments of coral reef, and bêche-de-mer was so abundant that our schooner might have taken a full cargo of it.

Hunt walked on in silence with downcast eyes, until as we were close upon the beach to the east, he, being about ten paces ahead, stopped abruptly, and summoned us to him by a hurried gesture.

In an instant we were by his side. Hunt had evinced no surprise on the subject of the piece of wood first found, but his attitude changed when he knelt down in front of a worm-eaten plank lying on the sand. He felt it all over with his huge hands, as though he were seeking some tracery on its rough surface whose signification might be intelligible to him. The black paint was hidden under the thick dirt that had accumulated upon it. The plank had probably formed part of a ship's stern, as the boatswain requested us to observe.

"Yes, yes," repeated Captain Len Guy, "it made part of a stern."

Hunt, who still remained kneeling, nodded his big head in assent.

"But," I remarked, "this plank must have been cast upon Bennet Islet from a wreck! The cross-currents must have found it in the open sea, and——"

"If that were so—" cried the captain.

The same thought had occurred to both of us. What was our surprise, indeed our amazement, our unspeakable emotion, when Hunt showed us eight letters cut in the

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plank, not painted, but hollow and distinctly traceable with the finger.

It was only too easy to recognize the letters of two names, arranged in two lines, thus:

AN
LI.E.PO.L.

The Jane of Liverpool! The schooner commanded by Captain William Guy! What did it matter that time had blurred the other letters? Did not those suffice to tell the name of the ship and the port she belonged to? *The Jane of Liverpool!*

Captain Len Guy had taken the plank in his hands, and now he pressed his lips to it, while tears fell from his eyes.

It was a fragment of the *Jane!* I did not utter a word until the captain's emotion had subsided. As for Hunt, I had never seen such a lightning glance from his brilliant hawk-like eyes as he now cast towards the southern horizon.

Captain Len Guy rose. Hunt, without a word, placed the plank upon his shoulder, and we continued our route. When we had made the tour of the island, we halted at the place where the boat had been left under the charge of two sailors, and about half-past two in the afternoon we were again on board.

Early on the morning of the 23rd of December the *Halbrane* put off from Bennet Islet, and we carried away with us new and convincing testimony to the catastrophe which Tsalal Island had witnessed.

During that day, I observed the sea water very attentively, and it seemed to me less deeply blue than Arthur Pym describes it. Nor had we met a single specimen of his monster of the austral fauna, an animal three feet long, six inches high, with four short legs, long coral claws, a silky body, a rat's tail, a cat's head, the hanging ears, blood-red lips and white teeth of a dog. The truth is that I regarded several of these details as "suspect," and entirely due to an over-imaginative temperament.

Seated far aft in the ship, I read Edgar Poe's book with sedulous attention, but I was not unaware of the fact that Hunt, whenever his duties furnished him with an opportunity, observed me pertinaciously, and with looks of singular meaning.

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And, in fact, I was re-perusing the end of Chapter XVII., in which Arthur Pym acknowledged his responsibility for the sad and tragic events which were the results of his advice. It was, in fact, he who over-persuaded Captain William Guy, urging him "to profit by so tempting an opportunity of solving the great problem relating to the Antarctic Continent." And, besides, while accepting that responsibility, did he not congratulate himself on having been the instrument of a great discovery, and having aided in some degree to reveal to science one of the most marvelous secrets which had ever claimed its attention?

At six o'clock the sun disappeared behind a thick curtain of mist. After midnight the breeze freshened, and the *Halbrane's* progress marked a dozen additional miles. On the morrow the good ship was less than the third of a degree, that is to say less than twenty miles, from Tsalal Island. Unfortunately, just after mid-day, the wind fell. Nevertheless, thanks to the current, the Island of Tsalal was signaled at forty-five minutes past six in the evening.

The anchor was cast, a watch was set, with loaded firearms within hand-reach, and boarding nets ready. The *Halbrane* ran no risk of being surprised. Too many eyes were watching on board—especially those of Hunt, whose gaze never quitted the horizon of that southern zone for an instant.

CHAPTER VI

TSALAL ISLAND

THE night passed without alarm. No boat had put off from the island, nor had a native shown himself upon the beach. The *Halbrane*, then, had not been observed on her arrival; this was all the better.

When the *Jane* appeared in these waters, the people of Tsalal beheld a ship for the first time, and they took it for an enormous animal, regarding its masts as limbs, and its sails as garments. Now, they ought to be better informed on this subject, and if they did not attempt to visit us, to what motive were we to assign such conduct?

Captain Len Guy gave orders for the lowering of the ship's largest boat, in a voice which betrayed his impatience.

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The order was executed, and the captain, addressing West, said, "Send eight men down with Martin Holt! send Hunt to the helm. Remain yourself at the moorings, and keep a look-out landwards as well as to sea."

"Aye, aye, sir; don't be uneasy."

"We are going ashore, and we shall try to gain the village of Klock-Klock. If any difficulty should arise on sea, give us warning by firing three shots."

"All right," replied West—"at a minute's interval."

"If we should not return before evening, send the second boat with ten armed men under the boatswain's orders, and let them station themselves within a cable's length of the shore, so as to escort us back. You understand?"

"Perfectly, captain."

"If we are not to be found, after you have done all in your power, you will take command of the schooner, and bring her back to the Falklands."

"I will do so."

The large boat was rapidly got ready. Eight men embarked in it, including Martin Holt and Hunt, all armed with rifles, pistols, and knives; the latter weapons were slung in their belts. They also carried cartridge-pouches.

I stepped forward and said, "Will you not allow me to accompany you, captain?"

"If you wish to do so, Mr. Jeorling."

I went to my cabin, took my gun—a repeating rifle—with ball and powder, and rejoined Captain Len Guy, who had kept a place in the stern of the boat for me. Our object was to discover the passage through which Arthur Pym and Dirk Peters had crossed the reef on the 19th of January, 1828, in the *Jane's* boat. For twenty minutes we rowed along the reef, and then Hunt discovered the pass, which was through a narrow cut in the rocks. Leaving two men in the boat, we landed, and having gone through the winding gorge which gave access to the crest of the coast, our little force, headed by Hunt, pushed on towards the center of the island. Captain Len Guy and myself exchanged observations, as we walked, on the subject of this country, which, as Arthur Pym declared, differed essentially from every other land hitherto visited by human beings. We soon found that Pym's description was trustworthy. The general color of the plains was black, as

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though the clay were made of lava-dust; nowhere was anything white to be seen. At a hundred paces' distance Hunt began to run towards an enormous mass of rock, climbed on it with great agility, and looked out over a wide extent of space like a man who ought to recognize the place he is in, but does not.

"What is the matter with him?" asked Captain Len Guy, who was observing Hunt attentively.

"I don't know what is the matter with him, captain. But, as you are aware, everything about this man is odd: his ways are inexplicable, and on certain sides of him he seems to belong to those strange beings whom Arthur Pym asserts that he found on this island. One would even say that——"

"That—" repeated the captain.

And then, without finishing my sentence, I said, "Captain are you sure that you made a good observation when you took the altitude yesterday?"

"Certainly."

"So that your point——"

"Gave 83° 20′ of latitude and 43° 5′ longitude."

"Exactly?"

"Exactly."

"There is, then, no doubt that we are on Tsalal Island?"

"None, Mr. Jeorling, if Tsalal Island lies where Arthur Pym places it."

This was quite true, there could be no doubt on the point, and yet of all that Arthur Pym described nothing existed, or rather, nothing was any longer to be seen. Not a tree, not a shrub, not a plant was visible in the landscape. There was no sign of the wooded hills between which the village of Klock-Klock ought to lie, or of the streams from which the crew of the *Jane* had not ventured to drink. There was no water anywhere; but everywhere absolute, awful drought.

Nevertheless, Hunt walked on rapidly, without showing any hesitation. It seemed as though he was led by a natural instinct, "a bee's flight," as we say in America. I know not what presentiment induced us to follow him as the best of guides, a Chingachgook, a Renard-Subtil. And why not? Was not he the fellow-countryman of Fenimore Cooper's heroes?

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But, I must repeat that we had not before our eyes that fabulous land which Arthur Pym described. The soil we were treading had been ravaged, wrecked, torn by convulsion. It was black, a cindery black, as though it had been vomited from the earth under the action of Plutonian forces; it suggested that some appalling and irresistible cataclysm had overturned the whole of its surface.

Not one of the animals mentioned in the narrative was to be seen, and even the penguins which abound in the Antarctic regions had fled from this uninhabitable land. Its stern silence and solitude made it a hideous desert. No human being was to be seen either on the coast or in the interior. Did any chance of finding William Guy and the survivors of the *Jane* exist in the midst of this scene of desolation?

I looked at Captain Len Guy. His pale face, thin eyes, and knit brow told too plainly that hope was beginning to die within his breast.

And then the population of Tsalal Island, the almost naked men, armed with clubs and lances, the tall, well-made, upstanding women, endowed with grace and freedom of bearing not to be found in a civilized society—those are the expressions of Arthur Pym—and the crowd of children accompanying them, what had become of all these? Where were the multitude of natives, with black skins, black hair, black teeth, who regarded white color with deadly terror?

All of a sudden a light flashed upon me. "An earthquake!" I exclaimed. "Yes, two or three of those terrible shocks, so common in these regions where the sea penetrates by infiltration, and a day comes when the quantity of accumulated vapor makes its way out and destroys everything on the surface."

"Could an earthquake have changed Tsalal Island to such an extent?" asked Len Guy, musingly.

"Yes, captain, an earthquake has done this thing; it has destroyed every trace of all that Arthur Pym saw here."

Hunt, who had drawn nigh to us, and was listening, nodded his head in approval of my words.

"Are not these countries of the southern seas volcanic?" I resumed. "If the *Halbrane* were to transport us to

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Victoria Land, we might find the *Erebus* and the *Terror* in the midst of an eruption."

"And yet," observed Martin Holt, "if there had been an eruption here, we should find lava beds."

"I do not say that there has been an eruption," I replied, "but I do say the soil has been convulsed by an earthquake."

On reflection it will be seen that the explanation given by me deserved to be admitted. And then it came to my remembrance that according to 'Arthur Pym's narrative, Tsalal belonged to a group of islands which extended towards the west. Unless the people of Tsalal had been destroyed, it was possible that they might have fled into one of the neighboring islands. We should do well, then, to go and reconnoiter that archipelago, for Tsalal clearly had no resources whatever to offer after the cataclysm.

I spoke of this to the captain.

"Yes," he replied, and tears stood in his eyes, "yes, it may be so. And yet, how could my brother and his unfortunate companions have found the means of escaping? Is it not far more probable that they all perished in the earthquake?"

Here Hunt made us a signal to follow him, and we did so. After he had pushed across the valley for a considerable distance, he stopped.

What a spectacle was before our eyes!

There, lying in heaps, were human bones, all the fragments of that framework of humanity which we call the skeleton, hundreds of them, without a particle of flesh, clusters of skulls still bearing some tufts of hair—a vast bone heap, dried and whitened in this place! We were struck dumb and motionless by this spectacle. When Captain Len Guy could speak, he murmured, "My brother, my poor brother!"

On a little reflection, however, my mind refused to admit certain things. How was this catastrophe to be reconciled with Patterson's memoranda? The entries in his note-book stated explicitly that the mate of the *Jane* had left his companions on Tsalal Island seven months previously. They could not then have perished in this earthquake, for the state of the bones proved that it had taken place several years earlier, and must have occurred after

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the departure of Arthur Pym and Dirk Peters, since no mention of it was made in the narrative of the former.

These facts were, then, irreconcilable. If the earthquake was of recent date, the presence of those time-bleached skeletons could not be attributed to its action. In any case, the survivors of the *Jane* were not among them. But then, where were they?

The valley of Klock-Klock extended no farther; we had to retrace our steps in order to regain the coast.

We had hardly gone half a mile on the cliff's edge when Hunt again stopped, on perceiving some fragments of bones which were turning to dust, and did not seem to be those of a human being. Were these the remains of one of the strange animals described by Arthur Pym, of which we had not hitherto seen any specimens?

Hunt suddenly uttered a cry, or rather a sort of savage growl, and held out his enormous hand, holding a metal collar. Yes! a brass collar, a collar eaten by rust, but bearing letters which might still be deciphered. These letters formed the three following words:

"*Tiger*—Arthur Pym."

Tiger!—the name of the dog which had saved Arthur Pym's life in the hold of the *Grampus,* and, during the revolt of the crew, had sprung at the throat of Jones, the sailor, who was immediately "finished" by Dirk Peters.

So, then, that faithful animal had not perished in the shipwreck of the *Grampus.* He had been taken on board the *Jane* at the same time as Arthur Pym and the half-breed. And yet the narrative did not allude to this, and after the meeting with the schooner there was no longer any mention of the dog. All these contradictions occurred to me. I could not reconcile the facts. Nevertheless, there could be no doubt that Tiger had been saved from the shipwreck like Arthur Pym, had escaped the landslip of the Klock-Klock hill, and had come to his death at last in the catastrophe which had destroyed a portion of the population of Tsalal.

But, again, William Guy and his five sailors could not be among those skeletons which were strewn upon the earth, since they were living at the time of Patterson's departure, seven months ago, and the catastrophe already dated several years back!

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Three hours later we had returned on board the *Halbrane*, without having made any other discovery. Captain Len Guy went direct to his cabin, shut himself up there, and did not reappear even at dinner hour.

The following day, as I wished to return to the island in order to resume its exploration from one coast to the other, I requested West to have me rowed ashore. He consented, after he had been authorized by Captain Len Guy, who did not come with us.

Hunt, the boatswain, Martin Holt, four men, and myself took our places in the boat, without arms; for there was no longer anything to fear. We disembarked at our yesterday's landing-place, and Hunt again led the way towards the hill of Klock-Klock. Nothing remained of the eminence that had been carried away in the artificial landslip, from which the captain of the *Jane*, Patterson, his second officer, and five of his men had happily escaped. The village of Klock-Klock had thus disappeared; and doubtless the mystery of the strange discoveries narrated in Edgar Poe's work was now and ever would remain beyond solution.

We had only to regain our ship, returning by the east side of the coast. Hunt brought us through the space where sheds had been erected for the preparation of the *bêche-de-mer*, and we saw the remains of them. On all sides silence and abandonment reigned.

We made a brief pause at the place where Arthur Pym and Dirk Peters seized upon the boat which bore them towards higher latitudes, even to that horizon of dark vapor whose rents permitted them to discern the huge human figure, the white giant.

Hunt stood with crossed arms, his eyes devouring the vast extent of the sea.

"Well, Hunt?" said I, tentatively.

Hunt did not appear to hear me; he did not turn his head in my direction.

"What are we doing here?" I asked him, and touched him on the shoulder. He started, and cast a glance upon me which went to my heart.

"Come along, Hunt," cried Hurliguerly. "Are you going to take root on this rock? Don't you see the *Halbrane* waiting for us at her moorings? Come along

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We shall be off to-morrow. There is nothing more to do here."

It seemed to me that Hunt's trembling lips repeated the word "nothing," while his whole bearing protested against what the boatswain said.

The boat brought us back to the ship. Captain Len Guy had not left his cabin. West, having received no orders, was pacing the deck aft. I seated myself at the foot of the mainmast, observing the sea which lay open and free before us.

At this moment the captain came on deck; he was very pale, and his features looked pinched and weary.

"Mr. Jeorling," said he, "I can affirm conscientiously that I have done all it was possible to do. Can I hope henceforth that my brother William and his companions—No! No! We must go away—before winter——"

He drew himself up, and cast a last glance towards Tsalal Island.

"To-morrow, Jim," he said to West, "to-morrow we will make sail as early as possible.

At this moment a rough voice uttered the words:

"And Pym—poor Pym!"

I recognized this voice. It was the voice I had heard in my dream.

CHAPTER VII
AND PYM?

"And Pym—poor Pym?"

I turned round quickly.

Hunt had spoken. This strange person was standing motionless at a little distance, gazing fixedly at the horizon.

It was so unusual to hear Hunt's voice on board the schooner, that the men, whom the unaccustomed sound reached, drew near, moved by curiosity. Did not his unexpected intervention point to—I had a presentiment that it did—some wonderful revelation?

A movement of West's hand sent the men forward, leaving only the mate, the boatswain and Martin Holt, the sailing-master, with the captain and myself in the vicinity of Hunt. The captain approached and addressed him:

"What did you say?"

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"I said, 'And Pym—poor Pym.'"

"Well, then, what do you mean by repeating the name of the man whose pernicious advice led my brother to the island on which the *Jane* was lost, the greater part of her crew was massacred, and where we have not found even one left of those who were still here seven months ago?"

Hunt did not speak.

"Answer, I say—answer!" cried the captain.

Hunt hesitated, not because he did not know what to say, but from a certain difficulty in expressing his ideas. The latter were quite clear, but his speech was confused, his words were unconnected. He had a certain language of his own which sometimes was picturesque, and his pronunication was strongly marked by the hoarse accent of the Indians of the Far West.

"You see," he said, "I do not know how to tell things. My tongue stops. Understand me, I spoke of Pym, poor Pym, did I not?"

"Yes," answered West, sternly; "and what have you to say about Arthur Pym?"

"I have to say that he must not be abandoned."

"Abandoned!" I exclaimed.

"No, never! It would be cruel—too cruel. We must go to seek him."

"To seek him?" repeated Captain Len Guy.

"Understand me; it is for this that I have embarked on the *Halbrane*—yes, to find poor Pym!"

"And where is he," I asked, "if not deep in a grave, in the cemetery of his natal city?"

"No, he is in the place where he remained, alone, all alone," continued Hunt, pointing towards the south; "and since then the sun has risen on that horizon seven times."

It was evident that Hunt intended to designate the Antarctic regions, but what did he mean by this?

"Do you not know that Arthur Pym is dead?" said the captain.

"Dead!" replied Hunt, emphasizing the word with an expressive gesture. "No! listen to me: I know things; understand me, he is not dead."

"Come now, Hunt," said I, "remember what you do know. In the last chapter of the adventures of Arthur

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Pym, does not Edgar Poe relate his sudden and deplorable end?"

"Explain yourself, Hunt," said the captain, in a tone of command. "Reflect, take your time, and say plainly whatever you have to say."

And, while Hunt passed his hand over his brow, as though to collect his memory of far-off things, I observed to Captain Guy, "There is something very singular in the intervention of this man, if indeed he be not mad."

At my words the boatswain shook his head, for he did not believe Hunt to be in his right mind.

The latter understood this shake of the boatswain's head, and cried out in a harsh tone, "No, not mad. And madmen are respected on the prairies, even if they are not believed. And I—I must be believed. No, no, no! Pym is not dead!"

"Edgar Poe asserts that he is," I replied.

"Yes, I know, Edgar Poe of Baltimore. But—he never saw poor Pym, never, never."

"What!" exclaimed Captain Len Guy; "the two men were not acquainted?"

"No!"

"And it was not Arthur Pym himself who related his adventures to Edgar Poe?"

"No, captain, no! He, below there, at Baltimore, had only the notes written by Pym from the day when he hid himself on board the *Grampus* to the very last hour—the last—understand me the last."

"Who, then, brought back that journal?" asked Captain Len Guy, as he seized Hunt's hand.

"It was Pym's companion, he who loved him, his poor Pym, like a son. It was Dirk Peters, the half-breed, who came back alone from there—beyond."

"The half-breed, Dirk Peters!" I exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"And Arthur Pym may be——"

"There," answered Hunt, in a loud voice, bending towards the southern line, from which he had not diverted his gaze for a moment.

Could such an assertion prevail against the general in-

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credulity? No, assuredly not! Martin Holt nudged Hurliguerly with his elbow, and both regarded Hunt with pity, while West observed him without speaking. Captain Len Guy made me a sign, meaning that nothing serious was to be got out of this poor fellow, whose mental faculties must have been out of gear for a long time.

Nevertheless, when I looked keenly at Hunt, it seemed to me that a sort of radiance of truth shone out of his eyes.

Then I set to work to interrogate the man, putting to him precise and pressing questions which he tried to answer categorically, as we shall see, and not once did he contradict himself.

"Tell me," I asked, "did Arthur Pym really come to Tsalal Island on board the *Grampus?*"

"Yes."

"Did Arthur Pym separate himself, with the half-breed and one of the sailors, from his companions while Captain William Guy had gone to the village of Klock-Klock?"

"Yes. The sailor was one Allen, and he was almost immediately stifled under the stones."

"Then the two others saw the attack, and the destruction of the schooner, from the top of the hill?"

"Yes."

"Then, some time later, the two left the island, after they had got possession of one of the boats which the natives could not take from them?"

"Yes."

"And, after twenty days, having reached the front of the curtain of vapor, they were both carried down into the gulf of the cataract?"

This time Hunt did not reply in the affirmative; he hesitated, he stammered out some vague words; he seemed to be trying to rekindle the half-extinguished flame of his memory. At length, looking at me and shaking his head, he answered:

"No, not both. Understand me—Dirk never told me——"

"Dirk Peters," interposed Captain Len Guy, quickly. "You knew Dirk Peters?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At Vandalia, State of Illinois."

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"And it is from him that you have all this information concerning the voyage?"

"From him."

"And he came back alone—alone—from that voyage, having left Arthur Pym."

"Alone!"

"Speak, man—do speak!" I cried, impatiently. Then, in broken, but intelligible sentences, Hunt spoke:

"Yes—there—a curtain of vapor—so the half-breed often said—understand me. The two, Arthur Pym and he, were in the Tsalal boat. Then an enormous block of ice came full upon them. At the shock Dirk Peters was thrown into the sea, but he clung to the ice block, and—understand me, he saw the boat drift with the current, far, very far, too far! In vain did Pym try to rejoin his companion, he could not; the boat drifted on and on, and Pym, that poor dear Pym, was carried away. It is he who has never come back, and he is there, still there!"

If Hunt had been the half-breed in person he could not have spoken with more heartfelt emotion of "poor Pym."

It was then, in front of the "curtain of vapor," that Arthur Pym and the half-breed had been separated from each other. Dirk Peters had succeeded in returning from the ice-world to America, whither he had conveyed the notes that were communicated to Edgar Poe.

Hunt was minutely questioned upon all these points and he replied, comformably, he declared, to what the half-breed had told him many times. According to this statement, Dirk Peters had Arthur Pym's note-book in his pocket at the moment when the ice-block struck them, and thus the journal which the half-breed placed at the disposal of the American romance-writer was saved.

"Understand me," Hunt repeated, "for I tell you things as I have them from Dirk Peters. While the drift was carrying him away, he cried out with all his strength. Pym, poor Pym, had already disappeared in the midst of the vapor. The half-breed, feeding upon raw fish, drifted to Tsalal Island, where he landed nearly half dead from hunger."

"To Tsalal Island!" exclaimed Captain Len Guy. "And how long was it since they had left it?"

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"Three weeks—yes, three weeks at the farthest, so Dirk Peters told me."

"Then he must have found all that remained of the crew of the *Jane*—my brother William and those who had survived with him?"

"No," replied Hunt; "and Dirk Peters always believed that they had perished—yes, to the very last man. There was no one upon the island."

"No one?"

"Not a living soul."

"But the population?"

"No one! No one, I tell you. The island was a desert—yes, a desert!"

This statement contradicted certain facts of which we were absolutely certain. After all, though, it was possible that when Dirk Peters returned to Tsalal Island, the population, seized by who can tell what terror, had already taken refuge upon the southwestern group, and that William Guy and his companions were still hidden in the gorges of Klock-Klock. That would explain why the half-breed had not come across them, and also why the survivors of the *Jane* had had nothing to fear during the eleven years of their sojourn in the island. On the other hand, since Patterson had left them there seven months previously, if we did not find them, that must have been because they had been obliged to leave Tsalal, the place being rendered uninhabitable by the earthquake.

"So that," resumed Captain Len Guy, "on the return of Dirk Peters, there was no longer an inhabitant on the island?"

"No one," repeated Hunt, "no one. The half-breed did not meet a single native."

"And what did Dirk Peters do?"

"Understand me. A forsaken boat lay there, at the back of the bay, containing some dried meat and several casks of water. The half breed got into it, and a south wind—yes, south, very strong, the same that had driven the ice block, with the cross current, towards Tsalal Island—carried him on for weeks and weeks—to the iceberg barrier, through a passage in it—you may believe me, I am telling you only what Dirk Peters told me—and he cleared the polar circle."

"And beyond it?" I inquired.

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"Beyond it. He was picked up by an American whaler, the *Sandy Hook,* and taken back to America."

Now, one thing at all events was clear. Edgar Poe had never known Arthur Pym. This was the reason why, wishing to leave his readers in exciting uncertainty, he had brought Pym to an end "as sudden as it was deplorable," but without indicating the manner or the cause of his death.

"And yet, although Arthur Pym did not return, could it be reasonably admitted that he had survived his companion for any length of time, that he was still living, eleven years having elapsed since his disappearance?"

"Yes, yes," replied Hunt.

And this he affirmed with the strong conviction that Dirk Peters had infused into his mind while the two were living together at Vandalia, in Illinois.

Now the question arose, was Hunt sane? Was it not he who had stolen into my cabin in a fit of insanity—of this I had no doubt—and murmured in my ear the words: "And Pym—poor Pym?"

Yes, and I had not been dreaming! In short, if all that Hunt had just said was true, if he was but the faithful reporter of secrets which had been entrusted to him by Dirk Peters, ought he to be believed when he repeated in a tone of mingled command and entreaty, "Pym is not dead. Pym is there. Poor Pym must not be forsaken!"

When I had made an end of questioning Hunt, Captain Len Guy came out of his meditative mood, profoundly troubled, and gave the word, "All hands forward!"

When the men were assembled around him, he said, "Listen to me, Hunt, and seriously consider the gravity of the questions I am about to put to you."

Hunt held his head up, and ran his eyes over the crew of the *Halbrane.*

"You assert, Hunt, that all you have told us concerning Arthur Pym is true?"

"Yes."

"You knew Dirk Peters?"

"Yes."

"You lived some years with him in Illinois?"

"Nine years."

"And he often related these things to you?"

"Yes."

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"And, for your own part, you have no doubt that he told you the exact truth?"

"None."

"Well, then, did it never occur to him that some of the crew of the *Jane* might have remained on Tsalal Island?"

"No."

"He believed that William Guy and his companions must all have perished in the landslip of the hill of Klock-Klock?"

"Yes, and from what he often repeated to me, Pym believed it also."

"Where did you see Dirk Peters for the last time?"

"At Vandalia."

"How long ago?"

"Over two years."

"And which of you two was the first to leave Vandalia?"

I thought I detected a slight hesitation in Hunt before he answered, "We left the place together."

"You, to go to?"

"The Falklands."

"And he?"

"He?" repeated Hunt.

And then his wandering gaze fixed itself on Martin Holt, our sailing-master, whose life he had saved at the risk of his own during the tempest.

"Well!" resumed the captain, "do you not understand what I am asking you?"

"Yes."

"Then answer me. When Dirk Peters left Illinois, did he finally give up America?"

"Yes."

"To go whither? Speak!"

"To the Falklands."

"And where is he now?"

"He stands before you."

Dirk Peters! Hunt was the half-breed Dirk Peters, the devoted companion of Arthur Pym, he whom Captain Guy had so long sought for in the United States, and whose presence was probably to furnish us with a fresh reason for pursuing our daring campaign.

I shall not be at all surprised if my readers have already

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recognized Dirk Peters in Hunt; indeed I shall be astonished if they have failed to do so. The extraordinary thing is that Captain Len Guy and myself, who had read Edgar Poe's book over and over again, did not see at once, when Hunt came on the ship at the Falklands, that he and the half-breed were identical! I can only admit that we were both blindfolded by some hidden action of Fate, just when certain pages of that book ought to have effectually cleared our vision.

There was no doubt whatever that Hunt really was Dirk Peters. Although he was eleven years older, he answered in every particular to the description of him given by Arthur Pym, except that he was no longer "of fierce aspect." In fact, the half-breed had changed with age and the experience of terrible scenes through which he had passed; nevertheless, he was still the faithful companion to whom Arthur Pym had often owed his safety, that same Dirk Peters who loved him as his own son, and who had never—no, never—lost the hope of finding him again one day amid the awful Antarctic wastes.

Now, why had Dirk Peters hidden himself in the Falklands under the name of Hunt? Why, since his embarkation on the *Halbrane,* had he kept up that *incognito?* Why had he not told who he was, since he was aware of the intentions of the captain, who was about to make every effort to save his countrymen by following the course of the *Jane?*

Why? No doubt because he feared that his name would inspire horror. Was it not the name of one who had shared in the horrible scenes of the *Grampus,* who had killed Parker, the sailor, who had fed upon the man's flesh, and quenched his thirst in the man's blood? To induce him to reveal his name he must needs be assured that the *Halbrane* would attempt to discover and rescue Arthur Pym!

And as to the existence of Arthur Pym? I confess that my reason did not rebel against the admission of it as a possibility. The imploring cry of the half-breed, "Pym, poor Pym! he must not be forsaken!" troubled me profoundly. Assuredly, since I had resolved to take part in the expedition of the *Halbrane,* I was no longer the same man!

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A long silence had followed the astounding declaration of the half-breed. None dreamed of doubting his veracity. He had said, "I am Dirk Peters." He was Dirk Peters.

At length, moved by irresistible impulse, I said: "My friends, before any decision is made, let us carefully consider the situation. Should we not lay up everlasting regret for ourselves if we were to abandon our expedition at the very moment when it promises to succeed? Reflect upon this, captain, and you, my companions. It is less than seven months since Patterson left your countrymen alive on Tsalal Island. If they were there then, the fact proves that for eleven years they had been enabled to exist on the resources provided by the island, having nothing to fear from the islanders, some of whom had fallen victims to circumstances unknown to us, and others had probably transferred themselves to some neighboring island. This is quite plain, and I do not see how any objection can be raised to my reasoning."

No one made answer: there was none to be made.

"If we have not come across the captain of the *Jane* and his people," I resumed, "it is because they have been obliged to abandon Tsalal Island since Patterson's departure. Why? In my belief, it was because the earthquake had rendered the island uninhabitable. Now, they would only have required a native boat to gain either another island or some point of the Antarctic continent by the aid of the southern current. I hardly hesitate to assert that all this has occurred; but in any case, I know, and I repeat, that we shall have done nothing if we do not persevere in the search on which the safety of your countrymen depends."

I questioned my audience by a look. No answer.

Captain Len Guy, whose emotion was unrestrained, bowed his head, for he felt that I was right, that by invoking the duties of humanity I was prescribing the only course open to men with feeling hearts.

"And what is in question?" I continued, after the silent pause. "To accomplish a few degrees of latitude, and that while the sea is open, while we have two months of good weather to look for, and nothing to fear from the southern winter. I certainly should not ask you to brave its severity. And shall we hesitate, when the *Halbrane*

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is abundantly furnished, her crew complete and in good health? Shall we take fright at imaginary dangers? Shall we not have courage to go on, on, thither?" And I pointed to the southern horizon. Dirk Peters pointed to it also, with an imperative gesture which spoke for him.

Still, the eyes of all were fixed upon us, but there was no response. I continued to urge every argument, and to quote every example in favor of the safety of pursuing our voyage, but the silence was unbroken, and now the men stood with eyes cast down.

I was asking myself whether I had or had not succeeded in inspiring my companions with my own belief, when Captain Len Guy spoke:

"Dirk Peters," he said, "do you assert that Arthur Pym and you after your departure from Tsalal Island saw land in the direction of the south?"

"Yes, land," answered the half-breed. "Islands or continent—understand me—and I believe that Pym, poor Pym, is waiting there until aid comes to him."

"There, where perhaps William Guy and his companions are also waiting," said I, to bring back the discussion to more practical points.

Captain Len Guy reflected for a little while, and then spoke: "Is it true, Dirk Peters," he asked, "that beyond the eighty-fourth parallel the horizon is shut in by that curtain of vapor which is described in the narrative? Have you seen—seen with your own eyes—those cataracts in the air, that gulf in which Arthur Pym's boat was lost?"

The half-breed looked from one to the other of us, and shook his big head. "I don't know," he said. "What are you asking me about, captain? A curtain of vapor? Yes, perhaps, and also appearances of land towards the south."

Evidently Dirk Peters had never read Edgar Poe's book, and very likely did not know how to read. After having handed over Pym's journal, he had not troubled himself about its publication. Having retired to Illinois at first and to the Falklands afterwards, he had no notion of the stir that the work had made, or of the fantastic and baseless climax to which our great poet had brought those strange adventures. And, besides, might not Arthur Pym himself, with his tendency to the supernatural, have fancied

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that he saw these wondrous things, due solely to his imaginative brain?

Then, for the first time in the course of this discussion, West spoke. I had no idea which side he would take. The first words he uttered were, "Captain, your orders?"

Captain Guy turned towards his crew, who surrounded him, both the old and the new. Hearne remained in the background, ready to intervene if he should think it necessary.

The captain questioned the boatswain and his comrades, whose devotion was unreservedly his, by a long and anxious look, and I heard him mutter between his teeth, "Ah! if it depended only on me! if I were sure of the assent and the help of them all!"

Then Hearne spoke roughly. "Captain," said he, "it's two months since we left the Falklands. Now, my companions were engaged for a voyage which was not to take them farther beyond the icebergs than Tsalal Island."

"That is not so," exclaimed Captain Len Guy. "No! That is not so. I recruited you all for an enterprise which I have a right to pursue, so far as I please."

"Beg pardon," said Hearne, coolly, "but we have come to a point which no navigator has ever yet reached, in a sea, no ship except the *Jane* has ever ventured into before us, and therefore my comrades and I mean to return to the Falklands before the bad season. From there *you* can return to Tsalal Island, and even go on to the Pole, if you so please."

A murmur of approbation greeted his words; no doubt the sealing-master justly interpreted the sentiments of the majority, composed of the new recruits. To go against their opinion, to exact the obedience of these ill-disposed men, and under such conditions to risk the unknown Antarctic waters, would have been an act of temerity—or, rather, an act of madness—that would have brought about some catastrophe.

Nevertheless, West, advancing upon Hearne, said to him in a threatening tone, "Who gave you leave to speak?"

"The captain questioned us," replied Hearne. "I had a right to reply."

The man uttered these words with such insolence that West, who was generally so self-restrained, was about to

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give free vent to his wrath, when Captain Len Guy, stopping him by a motion of his hand, said quietly, "Be calm, Jem. Nothing can be done unless we are all agreed. What is your opinion, Hurliguerly?"

"It is very clear, captain," replied the boatswain. "I will obey your orders, whatever they may be! It is our duty not to forsake William Guy and the others so long as any chance of saving them remains."

The boatswain paused for a moment, while several of the sailors gave unequivocal signs of approbation.

"As for what concerns Arthur Pym——"

"There is no question of Arthur Pym," struck in the captain, "but only of my brother William and his companions."

I saw at this moment that Dirk Peters was about to protest, and caught hold of his arm. He shook with anger, but kept silence.

The captain continued his questioning of the men, desiring to know by name all those upon whom he might reckon. The old crew to a man acquiesced in his proposals, and pledged themselves to obey his orders implicitly and follow him whithersoever he chose to go.

Three only of the recruits joined those faithful seamen; these were English sailors. The others were of Hearne's opinion, holding that for them the campaign was ended at Tsalal Island. They therefore refused to go beyond that point, and formally demanded that the ship should be steered northward so as to clear the icebergs at the most favorable period of the season.

Twenty men were on their side, and to constrain them to lend a hand to the working of the ship if she were to be diverted to the south would have been to provoke them to rebel. There was but one resource: to arouse their covetousness, to strike the chord of self-interest.

I intervened, therefore, and addressed them in a tone which placed the seriousness of my proposal beyond a doubt. "Men of the *Halbrane*, listen to me! Just as various States have done for voyages of discovery in the Polar Regions, I offer a reward to the crew of this schooner. Two thousand dollars shall be shared among you for every degree we make beyond the eighty-fourth parallel."

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Nearly seventy dollars to each man; this was a strong temptation. I felt that I had hit the mark.

"I will sign an agreement to that effect," I continued, "with Captain Len Guy as your representative, and the sums gained shall be handed to you on your return, no matter under what conditions that return be accomplished."

I waited for the effect of this promise, and, to tell the truth, I had not to wait long.

"Hurrah!" cried the boatswain, acting as fugleman to his comrades, who almost unanimously added their cheers to his. Hearne offered no farther opposition; it would always be in his power to put in his word when the circumstances should be more propitious.

Thus the bargain was made, and, to gain my ends, I would have made a heavier sacrifice. It is true we were within seven degrees of the South Pole, and, if the *Halbrane* should indeed reach that spot, it would never cost me more than fourteen thousand dollars.

Early in the morning of the 27th of December the *Halbrane* put out to sea, heading southwest. After the scene of the preceding evening Captain Len Guy had taken a few hours' rest. I met him next day on deck while West was going about fore and aft, and he called us both to him.

"Mr. Jeorling," he said, "it was with a terrible pang that I came to the resolution to bring our schooner back to the north! I felt I had not done all I ought to do for our unhappy fellow-countrymen; but I knew that the majority of the crew would be against me if I insisted on going beyond Tsalal Island'.'

"That is true, captain; there was a beginning of indiscipline on board, and perhaps it might have ended in a revolt."

"A revolt we should have speedily put down," said West, coolly, "were it only by knocking Hearne, who is always exciting the mutinous men, on the head."

"And you would have done well, Jem," said the captain. "Only, justice being satisfied, what would have become of the agreement together, which we must have in order to do anything?"

"Of course, captain, it is better that things passed off without violence! But for the future Hearne will have to look out for himself."

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"His companions," observed the captain, "are now greedy for the prizes that have been promised them. The greed of gain will make them more willing and persevering. The generosity of Mr. Jeorling has succeeded where our entreaties would undoubtedly have failed. I thank him for it."

Captain Len Guy held out a hand to me, which I grasped.

After some general conversation relating to our purpose, the ship's course, and the proposed verification of the bearings of the group of islands on the west of Tsalal which is described by Arthur Pym, the captain said:

"As it is possible that the ravages of the earthquake did not extend to this group, and that it may still be inhabited, we must be on our guard in approaching the bearings."

"Which cannot be very far off," I added. "And then, captain, who knows but that your brother and his sailors might have taken refuge on one of these islands!"

This was admissible, but not a consoling eventuality, for in that case the poor fellows would have fallen into the hands of those savages of whom they were rid while they remained at Tsalal.

"Jem," resumed Captain Len Guy, "we are making good way, and no doubt land will be signaled in a few hours. Give orders for the watch to be careful."

"It's done, captain."

"There is a man in the crow's-nest?"

"Dirk Peters himself, at his own request."

"All right, Jem; we may trust his vigilance."

"And also his eyes," I added, "for he is gifted with amazing sight."

For two hours of very quick sailing not the smallest indication of the group of eight islands was visible.

"It is incomprehensible that we have not come in sight of them," said the captain. "I reckon that the *Halbrane* has made sixty miles since this morning, and the islands in question are tolerably close together."

"Then, captain, we must conclude—and it is not unlikely—that the group to which Tsalal belonged has entirely disappeared in the earthquake."

"Land ahead!" cried Dirk Peters.

We looked, but could discern nothing on the sea, nor

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was it until a quarter of an hour had elapsed that our glasses enabled us to recognize the tops of a few scattered islets shining in the oblique rays of the sun, two or three miles to the westward.

What a change! How had it come about? Arthur Pym described spacious islands, but only a small number of tiny islets, half a dozen at most, protruded from the waters.

At this moment the half-breed came sliding down from his lofty perch and jumped to the deck.

"Well, Dirk Peters! Have you recognized the group?" asked the captain.

"The group?" replied the half-breed, shaking his head. "No, I have only seen the tops of five or six islets. There is nothing but stone heaps there—not a single island!"

As the schooner approached we easily recognized these fragments of the group, which had been almost entirely destroyed on its western side. The scattered remains formed dangerous reefs which might seriously injure the keel or the sides of the *Halbrane*, and there was no intention of risking the ship's safety among them. We accordingly cast anchor at a safe distance, and a boat was lowered for the reception of Captain Len Guy, the boatswain, Dirk Peters, Holt, two men and myself. The still, transparent water, as Peters steered us skillfully between the projecting edges of the little reefs, allowed us to see, not a bed of sand strewn with shells, but blackish heaps which were overgrown by land vegetation, tufts of plants not belonging to the marine flora that floated on the surface of the sea. Presently we landed on one of the larger islets which rose to about thirty feet above the sea.

"Do the tides rise sometimes to that height?" I inquired of the captain.

"Never," he replied, "and perhaps we shall discover some remains of the vegetable kingdom, of habitations, or of an encampment."

"The best thing we can do," said the boatswain, "is to follow Dirk Peters, who has already distanced us. The half-breed's lynx eyes will see what we can't."

Peters had indeed scaled the eminence in a moment, and we presently joined him on the top.

The islet was strewn with remains (probably of those

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domestic animals mentioned in Arthur Pym's journal), but these bones differed from the bones on Tsalal Island by the fact that the heaps dated from a few months only. This then agreed with the recent period at which we placed the earthquake. Besides, plants and tufts of flowers were growing here and there.

"And these are this year's," I cried, "no southern winter has passed over them."

These facts having been ascertained, no doubt could remain respecting the date of the cataclysm after the departure of Patterson. The destruction of the population of Tsalal whose bones lay about the village was not attributable to that catastrophe. William Guy and the five sailors of the *Jane* had been able to fly in time, since no bones that could be theirs had been found on the island.

Where had they taken refuge? This was the everpressing question. What answer were we to obtain? Must we conclude that having reached one of these islets they had perished in the swallowing-up of the archipelago? We debated this point, as may be supposed, at a length and with detail which I can only indicate here. Suffice it to say that a decision was arrived at to the following effect. Our sole chance of discovering the unfortunate castaways was to continue our voyage for two or three parallels farther; the goal was there, and which of us would not sacrifice even his life to attain it?

"God is guiding us, Mr. Jeorling," said Captain Len Guy.

CHAPTER VIII

A REVELATION

THE following day, the 29th of December, at six in the morning, the schooner set sail with a northeast wind, and this time her course was due south. The two succeeding days passed wholly without incident; neither land nor any sign of land was observed. The men on the *Halbrane* took great hauls of fish, to their own satisfaction and ours. It was New Year's Day, 1840, two months and five days since the *Halbrane* had sailed from the Falklands. The half-breed, between whom and myself an odd kind of tacit understanding subsisted, approached the bench on which I

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was sitting—the captain was in his cabin, and West was not in sight—with a plain intention of conversing with me. The subject may easily be guessed.

"Dirk Peters," said I, taking up the subject at once, "do you wish that we should talk of *him?*"

"Him!" he murmured.

"You have remained faithful to his memory, Dirk Peters."

"Forget him, sir! Never!"

"He is always there—before you?"

"Always! So many dangers shared! That makes brothers! No, it makes a father and his son! Yes! And I have seen America again, but Pym—poor Pym—he is still beyond there!"

"Dirk Peters," I asked, "have you any idea of the route which you and Arthur Pym followed in the boat after your departure from Tsalal Island?"

"None, sir! Poor Pym had no longer any instrument—you know—sea machines—for looking at the sun. We could not know, except that for the eight days the current pushed us towards the south, and the wind also. A fine breeze and a fair sea, and our shirts for a sail."

"Yes, white linen shirts, which frightened your prisoner Nu Nu——"

"Perhaps so—I did not notice. But if Pym has said so, Pym must be believed."

"And during those eight days you were able to supply yourselves with food?"

"Yes, sir, and the days after—we and the savage. You know—the three turtles that were in the boat. These animals contain a store of fresh water—and their flesh is sweet, even raw. Oh, raw flesh, sir!"

He lowered his voice, and threw a furtive glance around him. It would be impossible to describe the frightful expression of the half-breed's face as he thus recalled the terrible scenes of the *Grampus*. And it was not the expression of a cannibal of Australia or the New Hebrides, but that of a man who is pervaded by an insurmountable horror of himself.

"Was it not on the 1st of March, Dirk Peters," I asked "that you perceived for the first time the veil of gray vapor shot with luminous and moving rays?"

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"I do not remember, sir, but if Pym says it was so, Pym must be believed."

"Did he never speak to you of fiery rays which fell from the sky?" I did not use the term "polar aurora," lest the half-breed should not understand it.

"Never, sir," said Dirk Peters, after some reflection.

"Did you not remark that the color of the sea changed, grew white like milk, and that its surface became ruffled around your boat?"

"It may have been so, sir; I did not observe. The boat went on and on, and my head went with it."

"And then, the fine powder, as fine as ashes, that fell——"

"I don't remember it."

"Was it not snow?"

"Snow? Yes! No! The weather was warm. What did Pym say? Pym must be believed." He lowered his voice and continued: "But Pym will tell you all that, sir. He knows. I do not know. He saw, and you will believe him."

"Yes, Dirk Peters, I shall believe him."

"We are to go in search of him, are we not?"

"I hope so."

"After we shall have found William Guy and the sailors of the *Jane*?"

"Yes, after."

"And even if we do not find them?"

"Yes, even in that case. I think I shall induce our captain. I think he will not refuse——"

"No, he will not refuse to bring help to a man—a man like him!"

"And yet," I said, "if William Guy and his people are living, can we admit that Arthur Pym——"

"Living? Yes! Living!" cried the half-breed. "By the great spirit of my fathers, he is—he is waiting for me, my poor Pym! How joyful he will be when he clasps his old Dirk in his arms, and I—I, when I feel him, there, there." And the huge chest of the man heaved like a stormy sea. Then he went away, leaving me inexpressibly affected by the revelation of the tenderness for his unfortunate companion that lay deep in the heart of this semi-savage.

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In the meantime I said but little to Captain Len Guy, whose whole heart and soul were set on the rescue of his brother, of the possibility of our finding Arthur Gordon Pym. Time enough, if in the course of this strange enterprise of ours we succeeded in that object, to urge upon them one still more visionary.

At length, on the 7th of January—according to Dirk Peters, who had fixed it only by the time that had expired—we arrived at the place where Nu Nu the savage breathed his last, lying in the bottom of the boat. On that day an observation gave 86° 33′ for the latitude, the longitude remaining the same between the forty-second and the forty-third meridians. Here it was, according to the half-breed, that the two fugitives were parted after the collision between the boat and the floating mass of ice. But a question now arose. Since the mass of ice carrying away Dirk Peters had drifted towards the north, was this because it was subjected to the action of a counter-current?

Yes, that must have been so, for our schooner had not felt the influence of the current which had guided her on leaving the Falklands, for fully four days. And yet, there was nothing surprising in that, for everything is variable in the austral seas. Happily, the fresh breeze from the northeast continued to blow, and the *Halbrane* made progress toward higher waters, thirteen degrees in advance upon Weddell's ship and two degrees upon the *Jane*. As for the land—islands or continent—which Captain Len Guy was seeking on the surface of that vast ocean, it did not appear. I was well aware that he was gradually losing confidence in our enterprise.

As for me, I was possessed by the desire to rescue Arthur Pym as well as the survivors of the *Jane*. And yet, how could he have survived! But then, the half-breed's fixed idea! Supposing our captain were to give the order to go back, what would Dirk Peters do? Throw himself into the sea rather than return northwards? This it was which made me dread some act of violence on his part, when he heard the greater number of the sailors protesting against this insensate voyage, and talking of putting the ship about—especially towards Hearne, who was stealthily inciting his comrades of the Falklands to insubordination.

It was absolutely necessary not to allow discipline to

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decline, or discouragement to grow among the crew; so that, on the 7th of January, Captain Len Guy at my request assembled the men and addressed them in the following words: "Sailors of the *Halbrane,* since our departure from Tsalal Island, the schooner has gained two degrees southwards, and I now inform you, that, comformably with the engagement signed by Mr. Jeorling, four thousand dollars—that is two thousand dollars for each degree—are due to you, and will be paid at the end of the voyage."

These words were greeted with some murmurs of satisfaction, but not with cheers, except those of Hurliguerly the boatswain, and Endicott the cook, which found no echo.

On the 13th of January a conversation took place between the boatswain and myself of a nature to justify my anxiety concerning the temper of our crew.

The men were at breakfast, with the exception of Drap and Stern. The schooner was cutting the water under a stiff breeze. I was walking between the fore and main masts, watching the great flights of birds wheeling about the ship with deafening clangor, and the petrels occasionally perching on our yards. No effort was made to catch or shoot them; it would have been useless cruelty, since their oily and stringy flesh is not eatable.

At this moment Hurliguerly approached me, looked attentively at the birds, and said, "I remark one thing, Mr. Jeorling."

"What is it, boatswain?"

"That these birds do not fly so directly south as they did up to the present. Some of them are setting north."

"I have noticed the same fact."

"And I add, Mr. Jeorling, that those who are below there will come back without delay."

"And you conclude from this?"

"I conclude that they feel the approach of winter."

"Of winter?"

"Undoubtedly."

"No, no, boatswain; the temperature is so high that the birds can't want to get to less cold regions so prematurely."

"Oh! prematurely, Mr. Jeorling."

"Yes, boatswain; do we not know that navigators have

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always been able to frequent the Antarctic waters until the month of March?"

"Not at such a latitude. Besides, there are precocious winters as well as precocious summers. The fine season this year was full two months in advance, and it is to be feared the bad season may come sooner than usual."

"That is very likely," I replied. "After all, it does not signify to us, since our campaign will certainly be over in three weeks."

"If some obstacle does not arise beforehand, Mr. Joerling."

"And what obstacle?"

"For instance, a continent stretching to the south and barring our way."

"A continent, Hurliguerly!"

"I should not be at all surprised."

"And, in fact, there would be nothing surprising in it."

"As for the lands seen by Dirk Peters," said the boatswain, "where the men of the *Jane* might have landed on one or another of them, I don't believe in them."

"Why?"

"Because William Guy, who can only have had a small craft at his disposal, could not have got so far."

"I do not feel quite so sure of that."

"Nevertheless, Mr. Joerling——"

"What would there be so surprising in William Guy's being carried to land somewhere by the action of the currents? He did not remain on board his boat for eight months, I suppose. His companions and he may have been able to land on an island, or even on a continent, and that is a sufficient motive for us to pursue our search."

"No doubt—but all are not of your opinion," replied Hurliguerly, shaking his head.

"I know," said I, "and that is what makes me most anxious. Is the ill-feeling increasing?"

"I fear so, Mr. Jeorling. The satisfaction of having gained several hundreds of dollars is already lessened, and the prospect of gaining a few more hundreds does not put a stop to disputes. And yet the prize is tempting! From Tsalal Island to the pole, admitting that we might get there, is six degrees. Now six degrees at two thousand

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dollars each makes twelve thousand dollars for thirty men, that is four hundred dollars a head. A nice little sum to slip into one's pocket on the return of the *Halbrane*, but, notwithstanding, that fellow Hearne works so wickedly upon his comrades that I believe they are ready to 'bout ship in spite of anybody."

"I can believe that of the recruits, boatswain, but the old crew——"

"H—m! there are three or four of those who are beginning to reflect, and they are not easy in their minds about the prolongation of the voyage."

"I fancy Captain Len Guy and his lieutenants will know how to get themselves obeyed."

"We shall see, Mr. Jeorling. But may it not happen that our captain himself will get disheartened; that the sense of his responsibility will prevail, and that he will renounce his enterprise?"

Yes! this was what I feared, and there was no remedy on that side.

"As for my friend Endicott, Mr. Joerling, I answer for him as for myself. We would go to the end of the world—if the world has an end—did the captain want to go there. True, we two, Dirk Peters and yourself, are but a few to be a law to the others."

"And what do you think of the half-breed?" I asked.

"Well, our men appear to accuse him chiefly of the prolongation of the voyage. You see, Mr. Jeorling, though you have a good deal to do with it, you pay, and pay well, while this crazy fellow, Dirk Peters, persists in asserting that his poor Pym is still living—his poor Pym who was drowned, or frozen, or crushed—killed, anyhow, one way or another, eleven years ago!"

So completely was this my own belief that I never discussed the subject with the half-breed.

"You see, Mr. Jeorling," resumed the boatswain, "at the first some curiosity was felt about Dirk Peters. Then, after he saved Martin Holt, it was interest. Certainly, he was no more talkative than before, and the bear came no oftener out of his den! But now we know what he is, and no one likes him the better for that. At all events it was he who induced our captain, by talking of land to the south of Tsalal Island, to make this voyage, and it is owing

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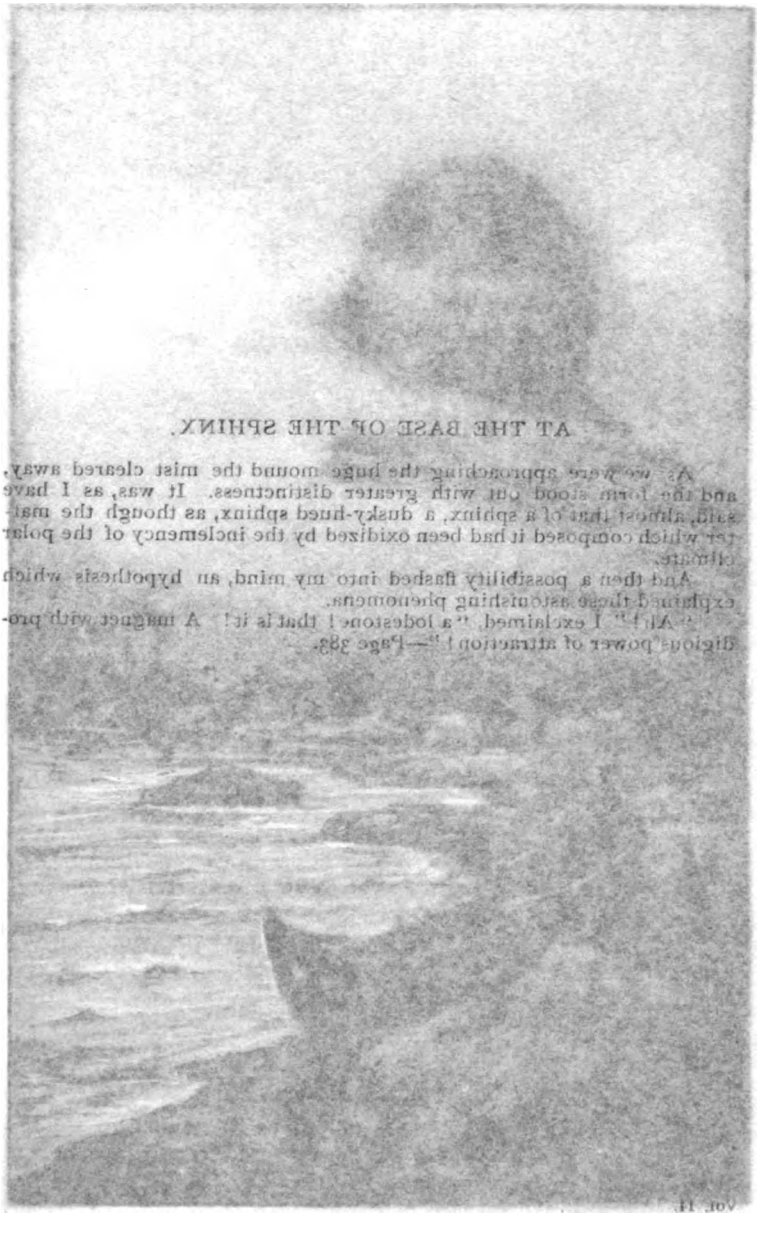

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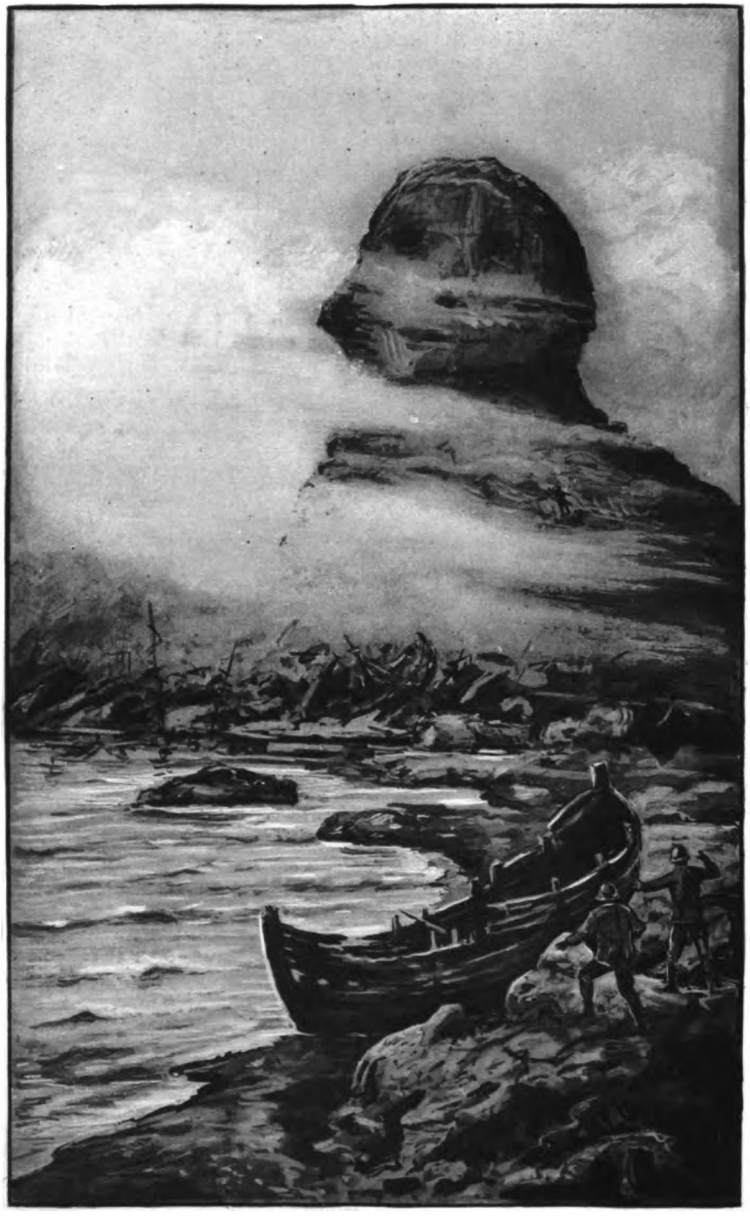
AT THE BASE OF THE SPHINX.

As we were approaching the huge mound the mist cleared away, and the form stood out with greater distinctness. It was, as I have said, almost that of a sphinx, a dusky-hued sphinx, as though the matter which composed it had been oxidized by the inclemency of the polar climate.

And then a possibility flashed into my mind, an hypothesis which explained these astonishing phenomena.

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "a lodestone! that is it! A magnet with prodigious power of attraction!"—Page 383.



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to him that he has reached the eighty-sixth degree of latitude."

"That is quite true, boatswain."

"And so, Mr. Jeorling, I am always afraid that one of these days somebody will do Peters an ill turn."

"Dirk Peters would defend himself, and I should pity the man who laid a finger on him."

"Quite so. It would not be good for anybody to be in his hands, for they could bend iron! But then, all being against him, he would be forced into the hold."

"Well, well, we have not yet come to that, I hope, and I count on you, Hurliguerly, to prevent any attempt against Dirk Peters. Reason with your men. Make them understand that we have time to return to the Falklands before the end of the fine season. Their reproaches must not be allowed to provide the captain with an excuse for turning back before the object is attained."

"Count on me, Mr. Jeorling. I will serve you to the best of my ability."

"You will not repent of doing so, Hurliguerly. Nothing is easier than to add a round O to the four hundred dollars which each man is to have, if that man be something more than a sailor—even were his functions simply those of boatswain on board the *Halbrane*."

Nothing important occurred on the 13th and 14th, but a fresh fall in the temperature took place. Captain Len Guy called my attention to this, pointing out the flocks of birds continuously flying north.

While he was speaking to me I felt that his last hopes were fading. And who could wonder? Of the land indicated by the half-breed nothing was seen, and we were already more than one hundred and eighty miles from Tsalal Island. At every point of the compass was the sea, nothing but the vast sea with its desert horizon which the sun's disk had been nearing since the 21st of December, and would touch on the 21st March, prior to disappearing during the six months of the austral night. Honestly, was it possible to admit that William Guy and his five companions could have accomplished such a distance on a frail craft, and was there one chance in a hundred that they could ever be recovered?

On the 15th of January an observation most carefully

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taken gave 43° 13′ longitude and 88° 17′ latitude. The *Halbrane* was less than two degrees from the pole.

Captain Len Guy did not seek to conceal the result of this observation, and the sailors knew enough of nautical calculation to understand it. Besides, if the consequences had to be explained to them, was not Holt there to do this, and Hearne, to exaggerate them to the utmost?

During the afternoon I had indubitable proof that the sealing-master had been working on the minds of the crew. The men, emerging at the foot of the mainmast, talked in whispers and cast evil glances at us. Two or three sailors made threatening gestures undisguisedly; then arose such angry mutterings that West could not feign to be deaf to them.

He strode forward and called out to them: "Silence, there! The first man who speaks will have to reckon with me!"

Captain Len Guy was shut up in his cabin, but every moment I expected to see him come out, give one last long look around the waste of waters, and then order the ship's course to be reversed. Nevertheless, on the next day the schooner was sailing in the same direction. Unfortunately —for the circumstance had some gravity—a mist was beginning to come down on us. I could not keep still, I confess. My apprehensions were redoubled. It was evident that West was only awaiting the order to change the helm. What mortal anguish soever the captain's must be, I understood too well that he would not give that order without hesitation.

It was about half-past two, and, not feeling well, I had gone to my cabin, where the side window was open, while that at the back was closed. I heard a knock at the door, and asked who was there.

"Dirk Peters," was the reply.

"You want to speak to me?"

"Yes."

"I am coming out."

"I should prefer—may I come into your cabin?"

"Come in."

He entered, and shut the door behind him.

Without rising I signed to him to seat himself in the arm-chair, but he remained standing.

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"What do you want of me?" I asked at length, as he seemed unable to make up his mind to speak.

"I want to tell you something—because it seems well that you should know it, and you only. In the crew—they must never know it."

"If it is a grave matter, and you fear any indiscretion, Dirk Peters, why do you speak to me?"

"If!—I must! Ah, yes! I must! It is impossible to keep it there! It weighs on me like a stone."

And Dirk Peters struck his breast violently.

Then he resumed. "Yes! I am always afraid it may escape me during my sleep, and that someone will hear it, for I dream of it, and in dreaming——"

"You dream," I replied, "and of what?"

"Of him, of him. Therefore it is that I sleep in corners, all alone, for fear that his true name should be discovered."

Then it struck me that the half-breed was perhaps about to respond to an inquiry which I had not yet made—why he had gone to live at the Falklands under the name of Hunt after leaving Illinois? I put the question to him, and he replied, "It is not that; no, it is not that I wish——"

"I insist, Dirk Peters, and I desire to know in the first place for what reason you did not remain in America, for what reason you chose the Falklands——"

"For what reason, sir? Because I wanted to get near Pym, my poor Pym—because I hoped to find an opportunity at the Falklands of embarking on a whaling ship bound for the southern sea."

"But that name of Hunt?"

"I would not bear my own name any longer—on account of the affair of the *Grampus*." The half-breed was alluding to the scene of the "short straw" (or lot-drawing) on board the American brig, when it was decided between Augustus Barnard, Arthur Pym, Dirk Peters, and Parker, the sailor, that one of the four should be sacrificed—as food for the three others. I remembered the obstinate resistance of Arthur Pym, and how it was impossible for him to refuse to take his part in the tragedy about to be performed—he says this himself—and the horrible act whose remembrance must poison the existence of all those who had survived it.

Oh, that lot-drawing! The "short straws" were little

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splinters of wood of uneven length which Arthur Pym held in his hand. The shortest was to designate him who should be immolated. And he speaks of the sort of involuntary fierce desire to deceive his companions that he felt—"to cheat" is the word he uses—but he did not "cheat," and he asks pardon for having had the idea! Let us try to put ourselves in his place!

He made up his mind, and held out his hand, closed on the four slips. Dirk Peters drew the first. Fate had favored him. He had nothing more to fear. Arthur Pym calculated that one more chance was against him. Arthur Barnard drew in his turn. Saved, too, he! And now Arthur Pym reckoned up the exact chances between Parker and himself. At that moment all the ferocity of the tiger entered into his soul. He conceived an intense and devilish hatred of his poor comrade, his fellow-man.

Five minutes elapsed before Parker dared to draw. At length Arthur Pym, standing with closed eyes, not knowing whether the lot was for or against him, felt a hand seize his own. It was the hand of Dirk Peters. Arthur Pym had escaped death. And then the half-breed rushed upon Parker and stabbed him in the back. The frightful repast followed—immediately—and words are not sufficient to convey to the mind the horror of the reality.

Yes! I knew that hideous story, not a fable, as I had long believed. This was what had happened on board the *Grampus*, on the 16th of July, 1827, and vainly did I try to understand Dirk Peters's reason for recalling it to my recollection.

"Well, Dirk Peters," I said, "I will ask you, since you were anxious to hide your name, what it was that induced you to reveal it, when the *Halbrane* was moored off Tsalal Island; why you did not keep to the name of Hunt?"

"Sir—understand me—there was hesitation about going farther—they wanted to turn back. This was decided, and then I thought that by telling who I was—Dirk Peters—of the *Grampus*—poor Pym's companion—I should be heard; they would believe with me that he was still living, they would go in search of him! And yet, it was a serious thing to do—to acknowledge that I was Dirk Peters, he who had killed Parker! But hunger, devouring hunger!"

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"Come, come, Dirk Peters," said I, "you exaggerate! If the lot had fallen to you, you would have incurred the fate of Parker. You cannot be charged with a crime."

"Sir, would Parker's family speak of it as you do?"

"His family! Had he then relations?"

"Yes—and that is why Pym changed his name in the narrative. Parker's name was not Parker—it was——"

"Arthur Pym was right," I said, interrupting him quickly, "and as for me, I do not wish to know Parker's real name. Keep this secret."

"No, I will tell it to you. It weighs too heavily on me, and I shall be relieved, perhaps, when I have told you, Mr. Jeorling."

"No, Dirk Peters, no!"

"His name was Holt—Ned Holt."

"Holt!" I exclaimed, "the same name as our sailing-master's."

"Who is his own brother, sir."

"Martin Holt?"

"Yes—understand me—his brother."

"But he believes that Ned Holt perished in the wreck of the *Grampus* with the rest."

"It was not so, and if he learned that I——"

Just at that instant a violent shock flung me out of my bunk. The schooner had made such a lurch to the port side that she was near foundering.

I heard an angry voice cry out: "What dog is that at the helm?"

It was the voice of West, and the person he addressed was Hearne. I rushed out of my cabin.

"Have you let the wheel go?" repeated West, who had seized Hearne by the collar of his jersey.

"Lieutenant—I don't know——"

"Yes, I tell you, you have let it go. A little more and the schooner would have capsized under full sail."

"Gratian," cried West, calling one of the sailors, "take the helm; and you, Hearne, go down into the hold."

On a sudden the cry of "Land!" resounded, and every eye was turned southwards.

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CHAPTER IX
LAND?

That cry of "Land" caused an immediate diversion of our thoughts. I no longer dwelt upon the secret Dirk Peters had just told me—and perhaps the half-breed forgot it also, for he rushed to the bow and fixed his eyes immovably on the horizon. As for West, whom nothing could divert from his duty, he repeated his commands, and Hearne was shut up in the hold.

On the whole this was a just punishment, and none of the crew protested against it, for Hearne's inattention or awkwardness had really endangered the schooner, though for a short time only.

Five or six of the Falklands sailors did, however, murmur a little. A sign from the mate silenced them, and they returned at once to their posts.

Needless to say, Captain Len Guy, upon hearing the cry of the look-out man, had tumbled up from his cabin and eagerly examined this land at ten or twelve miles distance.

As I have said, I was no longer thinking about the secret Dirk Peters had confided to me. Besides, so long as the secret remained between us two—and neither would betray it—there would be nothing to fear. But if ever an unlucky accident were to reveal to Martin Holt that his brother's name had been changed to Parker, that the unfortunate man had not perished in the shipwreck of the *Grampus,* but had been sacrificed to save his companions from perishing of hunger; that Dirk Peters, to whom Martin Holt himself owed his life, had killed him with his own hand, what might not happen then? This was the reason why the half-breed shrank from any expression of thanks from Martin Holt—why he avoided Martin Holt, the victim's brother.

The weather was still beautiful, although the sky was overcast by a mist from southeast to southwest. Owing to this there was some difficulty in identifying the vague outlines which stood out like floating vapor in the sky, disappearing and then reappearing between the breaks of the mist. However, we all agreed to regard this land as being from twenty-five to thirty fathoms in height, at least at its highest part.

No! we would not admit that we were victims of a de-

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lusion, and yet our uneasy minds feared it might be so!

Captain Len Guy tested the direction of the current repeatedly by heavy lead lines, and discovered that it was beginning to deviate from its former course.

"Whether it is a continent," said he, "that lies before us, or whether it is an island, we have at present no means of determining. If it be a continent, we must conclude that the current has an issue towards the southeast."

"And it is quite possible," I replied, "that the solid part of the Antarctic region may be reduced to a mere polar mound. In any case, it is well to note any of those observations which are likely to be accurate."

"That is just what I am doing, Mr. Jeorling, and we shall bring back a mass of information about this portion of the southern sea which will prove useful to navigators."

"If ever any venture to come so far south, captain! We have penetrated so far, thanks to the help of particular circumstances, the earliness of the summer season, an abnormal temperature and a rapid thaw. Such conditions may only occur once in twenty or fifty years!"

"Wherefore, Mr. Jeorling, I thank Providence for this, and hope revives in me to some extent. As the weather has been constantly fine, what is there to make it impossible for my brother and my fellow-countrymen to have landed on this coast, whither the wind and the tide bore them? What our schooner has done, their boat may have done! They surely did not start on a voyage which might be prolonged to an indefinite time without a proper supply of provisions! Why should they not have found the same resources as those afforded to them by the island of Tsalal during many long years? They had ammunition and arms elsewhere. Fish abound in these waters, waterfowl also. Oh yes! my heart is full of hope, and I wish I were a few hours older!"

Without being quite so sanguine as Len Guy, I was glad to see he had regained his hopeful mood. Perhaps, if his investigations were successful, I might be able to have them continued in Arthur Pym's interest—even into the heart of this strange land which we were approaching.

The *Halbrane* was going along slowly on these clear waters, which swarmed with fish belonging to the same species as we had already met. The sea-birds were more numer-

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ous, and were evidently not frightened; for they kept flying round the mast, or perching in the yards. Several whitish ropes about five or six feet long were brought on board. They were chaplets formed of millions of pearly shell-fish.

Whales, spouting jets of feathery water from their blow-holes, appeared at a distance, and I remarked that all of them took a southerly direction. There was therefore reason to believe that the sea extended far and wide in that direction.

The schooner covered two or three miles of her course without any increase of speed. This coast evidently stretched from northwest to southeast. Nevertheless, the telescopes revealed no distinctive features—even after three hours' navigation.

The crew, gathered together on the forecastle, were looking on without revealing their impressions. West, after going aloft to the fore-cross-trees, where he had remained ten minutes, had reported nothing precise. Stationed at the port side, leaning my elbows on the bulwarks, I closely watched the sky line, broken only towards the east.

At this moment the boatswain rejoined me, and without further preface said, "Will you allow me to give you my opinion, Mr. Jeorling?"

"Give it, boatswain," I replied, "at the risk of my not adopting it if I don't agree with it."

"It is not land which lies before us, Mr. Jeorling!"

"What is it you are saying?"

"Look attentively, putting one finger before your eyes —look there—starboard."

I did as Hurliguerly directed.

"Do you see?" he began again. "May I lose my liking for my grog if these heights do not change place, not with regard to the schooner, but with regard to themselves!"

"And what do you conclude from this?"

"That they are moving icebergs."

Was not the boatswain mistaken? Were we in for a disappointment? Were there only drifting ice-mountains in the distance instead of a shore?

Presently, there was no doubt on the subject; for some time past the crew had no longer believed in the existence of land in that direction. Ten minutes afterwards, the man

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in the crow's-nest announced that several icebergs were coming from the northwest, in an oblique direction, into the course of the *Halbrane*.

This news produced a great sensation on board. Our last hope was suddenly extinguished. And what a blow to Captain Len Guy! We should have to seek this land of the austral zone under higher latitudes without being sure of ever coming across it!

And then the cry, "Back ship! back ship!" resounded almost unanimously on board the *Halbrane*.

Yes, indeed, the recruits from the Falklands were demanding that we should turn back, although Hearne was not there to fan the flame of insubordination, and I must acknowledge that the greater part of the old tars seemed to agree with them.

West awaited his chief's orders, not daring to impose silence.

Holt was at the helm, ready to give a turn to the wheel, whilst his comrades with their hands on the cleats were preparing to ease off the sheets.

Dirk Peters remained immovable, leaning against the fore-mast, his head down, his body bent, and his mouth set firm. Not a word passed his lips.

But now he turned towards me, and what a look of mingled wrath and entreaty he gave me!

I don't know what irresistible motive induced me to interfere personally, and once again to protest! A final argument had just crossed my mind—an argument whose weight could not be disputed. So I began to speak, and I did so with such conviction that none tried to interrupt me.

The substance of what I said was as follows:

"No! all hope must not be abandoned. Land cannot be far off. The icebergs which are formed in the open sea by the accumulation of ice are not before us. These icebergs must have broken off from the solid base of a continent or an island. Now, since the thaw begins at this season of the year, the drift will last for only a short time. Behind them we must meet the coast on which they were formed. In another twenty-four hours, or forty-eight at the most, if the land does not appear, Captain Len Guy will steer to the north again!"

The boatswain came to my help, and in a good-humored

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voice exclaimed, "Very well reasoned, and for my part I accept Mr. Jeorling's opinion. Assuredly, land is near! If we seek it beyond those icebergs, we shall discover it without much hard work, or great danger! What is one degree farther south, when it is a question of putting a hundred additional dollars into one's pocket? And let us not forget that if they are acceptable when they go in, they are none the less so when they come out!"

Upon this, Endicott, the cook, came to the aid of his friend the boatswain. "Yes, very good things indeed are dollars!" cried he, showing two rows of shining white teeth.

Did the crew intend to yield to Hurliguerly's argument, or would they try to resist if the *Halbrane* went on in the direction of the icebergs?

Captain Len Guy took up his telescope again, and turned it upon these moving masses; he observed them with much attention, and cried out in a loud voice, "Steer south-sou'-west!"

West gave orders to execute the maneuvers. The sailors hesitated an instant. Then, recalled to obedience, they began to brace the yards and slack the sheets, and the schooner increased her speed.

When the operation was over, I went up to Hurliguerly, and drawing him aside, I said, "Thank you, boatswain."

"Ah, Mr. Jeorling," he replied, shaking his head, "it is all very fine for this time, but you must not do it again! Everyone would turn against me, even Endicott, perhaps."

"I have urged nothing which is not at least probable," I answered sharply.

"I don't deny that fact, Mr. Jeorling."

"Yes, Hurliguerly, yes—I believe what I have said, and I have no doubt but that we shall really see the land beyond the icebergs."

"Just possible, Mr. Jeorling, quite possible. But it must appear before two days, or, on the word of a boatswain, nothing can prevent us from putting about!"

During the next twenty-four hours the *Halbrane* took a south-southwesterly course. Nevertheless, her direction must have been frequently changed and her speed decreased in avoiding the ice. The navigation became very difficult so soon as the schooner headed towards the line of the

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bergs, which it had to cut obliquely. However, there were none of the packs which blocked up all access to the iceberg on the 67th parallel. The enormous heaps were melting away with majestic slowness. The ice-blocks appeared "quite new" (to employ a perfectly accurate expression), and perhaps they had only been formed some days. However, with a height of one hundred and fifty feet, their bulk must have been calculated by millions of tons. West was watching closely in order to avoid collisions, and did not leave the deck even for an instant.

Until now, Captain Len Guy had always been able to rely upon the indications of the compass. The magnetic pole, still hundreds of miles off, had no influence on the compass, its direction being east. The needle remained steady, and might be trusted.

So, in spite of my conviction, founded, however, on very serious arguments, there was no sign of land, and I was wondering whether it would not be better to steer more to the west, at the risk of removing the *Halbrane* from that extreme point where the meridians of the globe cross each other.

Thus, as the hours went by—and I was only allowed forty-eight—it was only too plain that lack of courage prevailed, and that everyone was inclined to be insubordinate. After another day and a half, I could no longer contend with the general discontent. The schooner must ultimately retrace her course towards the north.

The crew were working in silence, whilst West was giving sharp short orders for maneuvering through the channels, sometimes luffing in order to avoid a collision, now bearing away almost square before the wind. Nevertheless, in spite of a close watch, in spite of the skill of the sailors, in spite of the prompt execution of the maneuvers, dangerous friction against the hull, which left long traces of the ridge of the icebergs, occurred. And, in truth, the bravest could not repress a feeling of terror when thinking that the planking might have given way and the sea have invaded us.

The base of these floating ice-mountains was very steep, so that it would have been impossible for us to land upon one. Moreover, we saw no seals—these were usually very numerous where the ice-fields abounded—nor even a flock

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of the screeching penguins which, on other occasions, the *Halbrane* sent diving by myriads as she passed through them; the birds themselves seemed rarer and wilder. Dread, from which none of us could escape, seemed to come upon us from these desolate and deserted regions. How could we still entertain a hope that the survivors of the *Jane* had found shelter, and obtained means of existence in those awful solitudes?

Towards seven o'clock in the evening a rather thick mist arose; this would tend to make the navigation of the schooner difficult and dangerous. The day, with its emotions of anxiety and alternatives, had worn me out. So I returned to my cabin, where I threw myself on my bunk in my clothes.

Ah! were I only master of the schooner! If I could have bought it even at the price of all my fortune, if these men had been my slaves to drive by the lash, the *Halbrane* should never have given up this voyage, even if it led her so far as the point above which flames the Southern Cross.

My mind was quite upset, and teemed with a thousand thoughts, a thousand regrets, a thousand desires! I wanted to get up, but a heavy hand held me down in my bunk! And I longed to leave this cabin where I was struggling against nightmare in my half-sleep, to launch one of the boats of the *Halbrane*, to jump into it with Dirk Peters, who would not hesitate about following me, and so abandon both of us to the current running south.

Was this dream suddenly interrupted, or was it changed by a freak of my brain? I cannot tell, but I felt as though I had been suddenly awakened. It seemed as though a change had taken place in the motion of the schooner, which was sliding along on the surface of the quiet sea, with a slight list to starboard. And yet, there was neither rolling nor pitching. Yes, I felt myself carried off as though my bunk were the car of an air-balloon. I was not mistaken, and I had fallen from dreamland into reality.

Crash succeeded crash overhead. I could not account for them. Inside my cabin the partitions deviated from the vertical in such a way as to make one believe that the *Halbrane* had fallen over on her beam ends. Almost immediately, I was thrown out of my bunk and barely escaped

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splitting my skull against the corner of the table. However, I got up again, and, clinging on to the edge of the door frame, I propped myself against the door. At this instant the bulwarks began to crack, and the port side of the ship was torn open.

Could there have been a collision between the schooner and one of those gigantic floating masses which West was unable to avoid in the mist?

Suddenly loud shouts came from the after-deck, and then screams of terror, in which the maddened voices of the crew joined. At length there came a final crash, and the *Halbrane* remained motionless.

I had to crawl along the floor to reach the door and gain the deck. Captain Len Guy having already left his cabin, dragged himself on his knees, so great was the list to port, and caught on as best he could.

In the fore part of the ship, between the forecastle and the fore-mast, many heads appeared.

Dirk Peters, Hardy, Martin Holt and Endicott, the latter with his black face quite vacant, were clinging to the starboard shrouds.

A man came creeping up to me, because the slope of the deck prevented him from holding himself upright; it was Hurliguerly, working himself along with his hands like a top-man on a yard.

Stretched out at full length, my feet propped up against the jamb of the door, I held out my hand to the boatswain, and helped him, not without difficulty, to hoist himself up near me.

"What is wrong?" I asked.

"A stranding, Mr. Jeorling."

"We are ashore?"

"A shore presupposes land," replied the boatswain ironically, "and so far as land goes there was never any except in that rascal Dirk Peters's imagination."

"But tell me—what has happened."

"We came upon an iceberg in the middle of the fog, and were unable to keep clear of it."

"An iceberg, boatswain?"

"Yes, an iceberg, which has chosen just now to turn head over heels. In turning, it struck the *Halbrane* and carried it off just as a battledore catches a shuttlecock, and

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now here we are, stranded at certainly one hundred feet above the level of the Antarctic Sea."

Could one have imagined a more terrible conclusion to the adventurous voyage of the *Halbrane*? In the middle of these remote regions our only means of transport had just been snatched from its natural element, and carried off by the turn of an iceberg to a height of more than one hundred feet! What a conclusion! To be swallowed up in a polar tempest, to be destroyed in a fight with savages, to be crushed in the ice, such are the dangers to which any ship engaged in the polar seas is exposed! But to think that the *Halbrane* had been lifted by a floating mountain just as that mountain was turning over, was stranded and almost at its summit—no! such a thing seemed quite impossible.

I did not know whether we could succeed in letting down the schooner from this height with the means we had at our disposal. But I did know that Captain Len Guy, the mate and the older members of the crew, when they had recovered from their first fright, would not give up in despair, no matter how terrible the situation might be; of that I had no doubt whatsoever! They would all look to the general safety; as for the measures to be taken, no one yet knew anything. A foggy veil, a sort of grayish mist still hung over the iceberg. Nothing could be seen of its enormous mass except the narrow craggy cleft in which the schooner was wedged, nor even what place it occupied in the middle of the ice-fleet drifting towards the south-east.

Common prudence demanded that we should quit the *Halbrane*, which might slide down at a sharp shake of the iceberg. Were we even certain that the latter had regained its position on the surface of the sea? Was her stability secure? Should we not be on the look-out for a fresh upheaval? And if the schooner were to fall into the abyss, which of us could extricate himself safe and sound from such a fall, and then from the final plunge into the depths of the ocean?

In a few minutes the crew had abandoned the *Halbrane*. Each man sought for refuge on the ice-slopes, awaiting the time when the iceberg should be freed from mist. The oblique rays from the sun did not succeed in piercing it,

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and the red disk could hardly be perceived through the opaque mass.

We had now to ascertain whether any of those who were on the deck at the time of the catastrophe had been thrown over the bulwarks and precipitated into the sea? By Captain Len Guy's orders all the sailors then present joined the group in which I stood with the mate, the boatswain, Hardy and Martin Holt.

So far, this catastrophe had cost us five men—these were the first since our departure from Kerguelen, but were they to be the last?

There was no doubt that these unfortunate fellows had perished, because we called them in vain, and in vain we sought for them, when the fog abated, along the sides of the iceberg, at every place where they might have been able to catch on to a projection.

When the disappearance of the five men had been ascertained, we fell into despair. Then we felt more keenly than before the dangers which threaten every expedition to the Antarctic zone.

"What about Hearne?" said a voice.

Martin Holt pronounced the name at a moment when there was a general silence. Had the sealing-master been crushed to death in the narrow part of the hold where he was shut up?

West rushed towards the schooner, hoisted himself on board by means of a rope hanging over the bows, and gained the hatch which gives access to that part of the hold.

We waited silent and motionless to learn the fate of Hearne, although the evil spirit of the crew was but little worthy of our pity.

And yet, how many of us were then thinking that if we had heeded his advice, and if the schooner had taken the northern course, a whole crew would not have been reduced to take refuge on a drifting ice-mountain! I scarcely dared to calculate my own share of the vast responsibility, I who had so vehemently insisted on the prolongation of the voyage.

At length the mate reappeared on deck and Hearne followed him! By a miracle, neither the bulkheads, nor the ribs, nor the planking had yielded at the place where the sealing-master was confined.

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Hearne rejoined his comrades without opening his lips, and we had no further trouble about him.

Towards six o'clock in the morning the fog cleared off, owing to a marked fall in the temperature. We were now enabled to estimate the size of the solid mass on which we clustered like flies on a sugar-loaf, and the schooner, seen from below, looked no bigger than the yawl of a trading vessel. This iceberg of between three and four hundred fathoms in circumference measured from 130 to 140 feet high. According to all calculations, therefore, its depth would be four or five times greater, and it would consequently weigh millions of tons.

This is what had happened. The iceberg, having been melted away at its base by contact with warmer waters, had risen little by little; its center of gravity had become displaced, and its equilibrium could only be re-established by a sudden capsize, which had lifted up the part that had been underneath above the sea-level. The *Halbrane,* caught in this movement, was hoisted as by an enormous lever. Numbers of icebergs capsize thus on the polar seas, and form one of the greatest dangers to which approaching vessels are exposed.

Our schooner was caught in a hollow on the west side of the iceberg. She listed to starboard with her stern raised and her bow lowered. We could not help thinking that the slightest shake would cause her to slide along the slope of the iceberg into the sea. The collision had been so violent as to stave in some of the planks of her hull. After the first collision, the galley situated before the foremast had broken its fastenings. The door between Captain Len Guy's and the mate's cabins was torn away from the hinges. The topmast and the top-gallant-mast had come down after the back-stays parted, and fresh fractures could plainly be seen as high as the cap of the masthead.

Fragments of all kinds, yards, spars, a part of the sails, breakers, cases, hen-coops, were probably floating at the foot of the mass and drifting with it.

The most alarming part of our situation was the fact that of the two boats belonging to the *Halbrane,* one had been stove in when we grounded, and the other, the larger of the two, was still hanging on by its tackles to the starboard davits. Before anything else was done this boat

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had to be put in a safe place, because it might prove our only means of escape.

After an examination which lasted two hours, it was discovered that the damage was of little importance, and could be repaired in a short time. Two or three planks only were wrenched away by the collision. In the inside the skin was intact, the ribs not having given way. Our vessel, constructed for polar seas, had resisted where many others less solidly built would have been dashed to pieces. The rudder had indeed been unshipped, but that could easily be set right.

Having finished our inspection inside and outside, we agreed that the damage was less considerable than we feared, and on that subject we became reassured. Reassured! Yes, if we could only succeed in getting the schooner afloat again.

CHAPTER X
"UNMERCIFUL DISASTER"

AFTER breakfast, it was decided that the men should begin to dig a sloping bed which would allow the *Halbrane* to slide to the foot of the iceberg. Would that Heaven might grant success to the operation, for who could contemplate without terror having to brave the severity of the austral winter, and to pass six months under such conditions as ours on a vast iceberg, dragged none could tell whither? Once the winter had set in, none of us could have escaped from that most terrible of fates—dying of cold.

At this moment, Dirk Peters, who was observing the horizon from south to east at about one hundred paces off, cried out in a rough voice: "Lying to!"

Lying to? What could the half-breed mean by that, except that the floating mass had suddenly ceased to drift? As for the cause of this stoppage, it was neither the moment to investigate it, nor to ask ourselves what the consequences were likely to be.

"It is true, however," cried the boatswain. "The iceberg is not stirring, and perhaps has not stirred since it capsized!"

"How?" said I, "it no longer changes its place?"

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"No," replied the mate, "and the proof is that the others, drifting on, are leaving it behind!"

The simplest explanation was that the new base had encountered ground at the bottom of the sea to which it now adhered, and would continue to adhere, unless the submerged part rose in the water so as to cause a second capsize.

This complicated matters seriously, because the dangers of positive immobility were such that the chances of drifting were preferable. At least, in the latter case there was some hope of coming across a continent or an island, or even (if the currents did not change) of crossing the boundaries of the austral region.

Here we were, then, after three months of this terrible voyage! Was there now any question of trying to save William Guy and his comrades on the *Jane*, and Arthur Pym? Was it not for our own safety that any means at our disposal should be employed? And could it be wondered at were the sailors of the *Halbrane* to rebel, were they to listen to Hearne's suggestions, and make their officers, or myself especially, responsible for the disasters of this expedition?

Moreover, what was likely to take place, since, notwithstanding their losses, the followers of the sealing-master were still a majority of the ship's company?

This question I could clearly see was occupying the thoughts of Captain Len Guy and West. Again, although the recruits from the Falklands formed only a total of fourteen men, as against the twelve of the old crew, was it not to be feared that some of the latter would take Hearne's side? What if Hearne's people, urged by despair, were already thinking of seizing the only boat we now possessed, setting off towards the north, and leaving us on this iceberg? It was, then, of great importance that our boat should be put in safety and closely watched.

A marked change had taken place in Captain Len Guy since the recent occurrences. He seemed to be transformed upon finding himself face to face with the dangers which menaced us. Up to that time he had been solely occupied in searching for his fellow-countrymen; he had handed over the command of the schooner to West, and he could not have given it to anyone more zealous and more capable.

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But from this date he resumed his position as master of the ship, and used it with the energy required by the circumstances; in a word, he again became sole master on board, after God.

At his command the crew were drawn up around him on a flat spot a little to the left of the *Halbrane*. In that place the following were assembled:—on the seniors' side: Martin Holt and Hardy, Rogers, Francis, Gratian, Bury, Stern, the cook (Endicott), and I may add Dirk Peters; on the side of the new-comers, Hearne and the thirteen other Falkland sailors. The latter composed a distinct group; the sealing-master was their spokesman and exercised a baneful influence over them.

Captain Len Guy cast a stern glance upon the men and said in a sharp tone, "Sailors of the *Halbrane*, I must first speak to you of our lost companions. Five of us have just perished in this catastrophe."

"We are waiting to perish in our turn, in these seas, where we have been dragged in spite of——"

"Be silent, Hearne," cried West, pale with anger, "or if not——"

"Hearne has said what he had to say," Captain Len Guy continued, coldly. "Now it is said, and I advise him not to interrupt me a second time!"

The sealing-master might possibly have ventured on an answer, for he felt that he was backed by the majority of the crew; but Martin Holt held him back, and he was silent.

Captain Len Guy then took off his hat and pronounced the following words with an emotion that affected us to the bottom of our hearts. "We must pray for those who have died in this dangerous voyage, which was undertaken in the name of humanity. May God be pleased to take into consideration the fact that they devoted their lives to their fellow-creatures, and may He not be insensible to our prayers! Kneel down, sailors of the *Halbrane!*"

They all knelt down on the icy surface, and the murmurs of prayer ascended towards heaven.

We waited for Captain Len Guy to rise before we did so. "Now," he resumed, "after those who are dead come those who have survived. To them I say that they must obey me, whatever my orders may be, and even in our present situation I shall not tolerate any hesitation or oppo-

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sition. The responsibility for the general safety is mine, and I will not yield any of it to anyone. I am master here, as on board——"

"On board—when there is no longer a ship," muttered the sealing-master.

"You are mistaken, Hearne, the vessel is there, and we will put it back into the sea. Besides, if we had only a boat, I am captain of it. Let him beware who forgets this!"

That day Captain Len Guy, having taken the height of the sun by the sextant and fixed the hour by the chronometer (both of these instruments had escaped destruction in the collision), obtained the following position of his ship:

South latitude: 88° 55′.

West longitude: 39° 12′.

The *Halbrane* was only 1° 5′—about 65 miles—from the south pole.

"All hands to work," was the captain's order that afternoon, and everyone obeyed it with a will. There was not a moment to lose, as the question of time was more important than any other. So far as provisions were concerned, there was enough in the schooner for eighteen months on full rations, so we were not threatened with hunger, nor with thirst either, notwithstanding that owing to the water-casks having been burst in the collision, their contents had escaped through their staves. Luckily, the barrels of gin, whisky, beer, and wine, being placed in the least exposed part of the hold, were nearly all intact. Under this head we had experienced no loss, and the iceberg would supply us with good drinking-water. It is a well-known fact that ice, whether formed from fresh or salt water, contains no salt, owing to the chloride of sodium being eliminated in the change from the liquid to the solid state. The origin of the ice, therefore, is a matter of no importance. However, those blocks which are easily distinguished by their greenish color and their perfect transparency are preferable. They are solidified rain, and therefore much more suitable for drinking-water.

Without doubt, our captain would have recognized any blocks of this description, but none were to be found on the glacier, owing to its being that part of the berg which was originally submerged, and came to the top after the fall.

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The captain and West decided first to lighten the vessel, by conveying everything on board to land. The masts were to be cleared of rigging, taken out, and placed on the plateau. It was necessary to lighten the vessel as much as possible, even to clear out the ballast, owing to the difficult and dangerous operation of launching. It would be better to put off our departure for some days if this operation could be performed under more favorable circumstances. The loading might be afterwards accomplished without much difficulty.

Besides this, another reason by no means less serious presented itself to us. It would have been an act of unpardonable rashness to leave the provisions in the store-room of the *Halbrane,* her situation on the side of the iceberg being very precarious. One shake would suffice to detach the ship, and with her would have disappeared the supplies on which our lives depended.

On this account, we passed the day in removing casks of half-salted meat, dried vegetables, flour, biscuits, tea, coffee, barrels of gin, whisky, wine and beer from the hold and store-room and placing them in safety in the hammocks near the *Halbrane.*

We also had to insure our landing against any possible accident, and, I must add, against any plot on the part of Hearne and others to seize the boat in order to return to the ice-barrier.

We placed the long boat in a cavity which would be easy to watch, about thirty feet to the left of the schooner, along with its oars, rudder, compass, anchor, masts and sail.

By day there was nothing to fear, and at night, or rather during the hours of sleep, the boatswain and one of the superiors would keep guard near the cavity, and we might rest assured that no evil could befall.

The 19th, 20th, and 21st of January were passed in working extra hard in the unshipping of the cargo and the dismantling of the *Halbrane.* We slung the lower masts by means of yards forming props. Later on, West would see to replacing the main and mizzen masts; in any case, we could do without them until we had reached the Falklands or some other winter port.

Needless to say, we had set up a camp on the plateau of which I have spoken, not far from the *Halbrane.* Suffi-

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cient shelter against the inclemency of the weather, not unfrequent at this time of the year, was to be found under tents, constructed of sails placed on spars and fastened down by pegs. The glass remained set fair; the wind was nor'-east, the temperature having risen to 46 degrees (2° 78′ C.).

Endicott's kitchen was fitted up at the end of the plain, near a steep projection by which we could climb to the very top of the berg.

It is only fair to state that during these three days of hard work no fault was to be found with Hearne. The sealing-master knew he was being closely watched, and he was well aware that Captain Len Guy would not spare him if he tried to get up insubordination amongst his comrades. It was a pity that his bad instincts had induced him to play such a part, for his strength, skill, and cleverness made him a very valuable man, and he had never proved more useful than under these circumstances.

Was he changed for the better? Did he understand that general good feeling was necessary for the safety of all? I know not, but I had no confidence in him, neither had Hurliguerly!

I need not dwell on the ardor with which the half-breed did the rough work, always first to begin and the last to leave off, doing as much as four men, and scarcely sleeping, only resting during meals, which he took apart from the others. He had hardly spoken to me at all since the schooner had met with this terrible accident.

What indeed could he say to me? Did I not know as well as he that it would be necessary to renounce every hope of pursuing our intended voyage?

Now and again I noticed Martin Holt and the half-breed near each other while some difficult piece of work was in progress. Our sailing-master did not miss a chance of getting near Dirk Peters, who always tried his best to escape from him, for reasons well known to me. And whenever I thought of the secret of the fate of the so-called Parker, Martin Holt's brother, which had been entrusted to me, that dreadful scene of the *Grampus* filled me with horror. I was certain that if this secret were made known the half-breed would become an object of terror. He would no longer be looked upon as the rescuer of the sail-

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ing-master; and the latter, learning that his brother—— Luckily, Dirk Peters and myself were the only two acquainted with the fact.

Often when he had finished his work, Hurliguerly would come and join me; we would chat, and we would compare our recollections of travel.

One day as we were seated on the summit of the iceberg, gazing fixedly on the deceptive horizon, he exclaimed:

"Who could ever have imagined, Mr. Jeorling, when the *Halbrane* left Kerguelen, that six and a half months afterwards she would be stuck on the side of an enormous ice-mountain?"

"A fact much more to be regretted," I replied, "because only for that accident we should have attained our object, and we should have begun our return journey."

"I don't mean to contradict," replied the boatswain, "but you say we should have attained our object?"

"What—do you also hesitate, boatswain—you whom I believed to be so confident!"

"Confidence, Mr. Jeorling, wears out like the ends of one's trousers. What would you have me do? Oh, if I were the only one it would not be half so bad as it is!"

"The whole crew does not despair, surely?"

"Yes—and no," replied Hurliguerly, "for I know some who are not at all satisfied!"

"Has Hearne begun his mischief again? Is he exciting his companions?"

"Not openly at least, Mr. Jeorling, and since I have kept him under my eye I have neither seen nor heard anything. Besides, he knows what awaits him if he budges. I believe I am not mistaken, the sly dog has changed his tactics. But what does not astonish me in him, astonishes me in Martin Holt."

"What do you mean, boatswain?"

"That they seem to be on good terms. See how Hearne seeks out Martin Holt, talks to him frequently, and Holt does not treat his overtures unfavorably."

"Martin Holt is not one of those who would listen to Hearne's advice, or follow it if he tried to provoke rebellion amongst the crew."

"No doubt, Mr. Jeorling. However, I don't fancy seeing them so much together. Hearne is a dangerous and

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unscrupulous individual, and most likely Martin Holt does not distrust him sufficiently."

"He is wrong, boatswain."

"And—wait a moment—do you know what they were talking about the other day when I overheard a few scraps of their conversation?"

"I could not possibly guess until you tell me."

"Well, while they were conversing on the bridge of the *Halbrane,* I heard them talking about Dirk Peters, and Hearne was saying: 'You must not owe a grudge to the half-breed, Master Holt, because he refused to respond to your advances and accept your thanks! If he be only a sort of brute, he possesses plenty of courage, and has showed it in getting you out of a bad corner at the risk of his life. And besides, do not forget that he formed part of the crew of the *Grampus,* and your brother Ned, if I don't mistake——'"

"He said that, boatswain; he spoke of the *Grampus?*" I exclaimed.

"Yes—of the *Grampus!*"

"And of Ned Holt?"

"Precisely, Mr. Jeorling!"

"And what answer did Martin Holt make?"

"He replied: 'I don't even know under what circumstances my unfortunate brother perished. Was it during a revolt on board? Brave man that he was, he would not betray his captain, and perhaps he was massacred."

"Did Hearne dwell on this, boatswain?"

"Yes, but he added: 'It is very sad for you, Master Holt! The captain of the *Grampus,* according to what I have been told, was abandoned, being placed in a small boat with one or two of his men—and who knows if your brother was not along with him?'"

"And what next?"

"Then, Mr. Jeorling, he added: 'Did it never occur to you to ask Dirk Peters to enlighten you on the subject?' 'Yes, once,' replied Martin Holt, 'I questioned the half-breed about it, and never did I see a man so overcome. He replied in so low a voice that I could scarcely understand him, "I know not—I know not——" and he ran away with his face buried in his hands.'"

"Was that all you heard of the conversation?"

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"That was all, Mr. Jeorling, and I thought it so strange that I wished to inform you of it.'

"And what conclusion did you draw from it?"

"Nothing, except that I look upon the sealing-master as a scoundrel of the deepest dye, perfectly capable of working in secret for some evil purpose with which he would like to associate Martin Holt!"

What did Hearne's new attitude mean? Why did he strive to gain Martin Holt, one of the best of the crew, as an ally? Why did he recall the scenes of the *Grampus?* Did Hearne know more of this matter of Dirk Peters and Ned Holt than the others; this secret of which the half-breed and I believed ourselves to be the sole possessors?

The doubt caused me serious uneasiness. However, I took good care not to say anything of it to Dirk Peters. If he had for a moment suspected that Hearne spoke of what happened on board the *Grampus,* if he had heard that the rascal (as Hurliguerly called him, and not without reason) constantly talked to Martin Holt about his brother, I really do not know what would have happened.

In short, whatever the intentions of Hearne might be, it was dreadful to think that our sailing-master, on whose fidelity Captain Len Guy ought to be able to count, was in conspiracy with him. The sealing-master must have a strong motive for acting in this way. What it was I could not imagine. Although the crew seemed to have abandoned every thought of mutiny, a strict watch was kept, especially on Hearne.

Besides, the situation must soon change, at least so far as the schooner was concerned. Two days afterwards the work was finished. The caulking operations were completed, and also the slide for lowering the vessel to the base of our floating mountain.

Just now the upper portion of the ice had been slightly softened, so that this last work did not entail much labor for pickax or spade. The course ran obliquely round the west side of the berg, so that the incline should not be too great at any point. With cables properly fixed, the launch, it seemed, might be effected without any mishap. I rather feared lest the melting of the ice should make the gliding less smooth at the lower part of the berg.

Needless to say, the cargo, masting, anchors, chains, etc.,

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had not been put on board. The hull was quite heavy enough, and not easily moved, so it was necessary to lighten it as much as possible. When the schooner was again in its element, the loading could be effected in a few days.

On the afternoon of the 28th, the finishing touches were given. It was necessary to put supports for the sides of the slide in some places where the ice had melted quickly. Then everyone was allowed to rest from 4 o'clock P. M. The captain had double rations served out to all hands, and well they merited this extra supply of spirits; they had indeed worked hard during the week. I repeat that every sign of mutiny had disappeared. The crew thought of nothing except this great operation of the launching. The *Halbrane* in the sea would mean departure, it would also mean return! For Dirk Peters and me it would be the definite abandonment of Arthur Pym.

That night the temperature was the highest we had so far experienced. The thermometer registered 53° (11° 67′ C.). So, although the sun was nearing the horizon, the ice was melting, and thousands of small streams flowed in every direction. The early birds awoke at four o'clock, and I was one of their number. I had scarcely slept, and I fancy that Dirk Peters did not sleep much, haunted as he was by the sad thought of having to turn back!

The launch was to take place at ten o'clock. Taking every possible difficulty into account, and allowing for the minutest precautions, the captain hoped that it would be completed before the close of the day. Everyone believed that by evening the schooner would be at the foot of the berg.

Of course we had all to lend a hand to this difficult task. To each man a special duty was assigned; some were employed to facilitate the sliding with wooden rollers, if necessary; others to moderate the speed of the hull, in case it became too great, by means of hawsers and cables.

We breakfasted at nine o'clock in the tents. Our sailors were perfectly confident, and could not refrain from drinking "success to the event"; and although this was a little premature, we added our hurrahs to theirs. Success seemed very nearly assured, as the captain and the mate had worked out the matter so carefully and skillfully. At last we were about to leave our encampment and take up

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our stations (some of the sailors were there already), when cries of amazement and fear were raised. What a frightful scene, and, short as it may have been, what an impression of terror it left on our minds!

One of the enormous blocks which formed the bank of the mud-bed where the *Halbrane* lay, having become loose owing to the melting of its base, had slipped and was bounding over the others down the incline.

In another moment, the schooner, being no longer retained in position, was swinging on this declivity.

On board, on deck, in front, there were two sailors, Rogers and Gratian. In vain did the unfortunate men try to jump over the bulwarks, they had not time, and they were dragged away in this dreadful fall.

Yes! I saw it! I saw the schooner topple over, slide down first on its left side, crush one of the men who delayed too long about jumping to one side, then bound from block to block, and finally fling itself into space.

In another moment the *Halbrane*, staved in, broken up, with gaping planks and shattered ribs, had sunk, causing a tremendous jet of water to spout up at the foot of the iceberg.

Horrified! yes, indeed, we were horrified when the schooner, carried off as though by an avalanche, had disappeared in the abyss! Not a particle of our *Halbrane* remained, not even a wreck!

A minute ago she was one hundred feet in the air, now she was five hundred in the depths of the sea! Yes, we were so stupefied that we were unable to think of the dangers to come—our amazement was that of people who "cannot believe their eyes."

Prostration succeeded as a natural consequence. There was not a word spoken. We stood motionless, with our feet rooted to the icy soil. No words could express the horror of our situation.

As for West, when the schooner had disappeared in the abyss, I saw big tears fall from his eyes. The *Halbrane* that he loved so much was now an unknown quantity! Yes, our stout-hearted mate wept.

Three of our men had perished, and in what frightful fashion! I had seen Rogers and Gratian, two of our most faithful sailors, stretch out their hands in despair as they

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were knocked about by the rebounding of the schooner, and finally sink with her! The other man from the Falklands, an American, was crushed in its rush; his shapeless form lay in a pool of blood. Three new victims within the last ten days had to be inscribed on the register of those who died during this fatal voyage! Ah! fortune had favored us up to the hour when the *Halbrane* was snatched from her own element, but her hand was now against us. And was not this last the worst blow—must it not prove the stroke of death?

The silence was broken by a tumult of despairing voices, whose despair was justified indeed by this irreparable misfortune! And I am sure that more than one thought it would have been better to have been on the *Halbrane* as she rebounded off the side of the iceberg! Everything would have been over then, as all was over with Rogers and Gratian! This foolish expedition would thus have come to a conclusion worthy of such rashness and imprudence!

At last, the instinct of self-preservation triumphed, and except Hearne, who stood some distance off and affected silence, all the men shouted: "To the boat! to the boat!"

These unfortunate fellows were out of their mind. Terror had led them astray. They rushed towards the crag where our one boat (which could not hold them all) had been sheltered during the unloading of the schooner.

Captain Len Guy and Jem West rushed after them. I joined them immediately, followed by the boatswain. We were armed, and resolved to make use of our arms. We had to prevent these furious men from seizing the boat, which did not belong to a few, but to all!

"Hallo, sailors!" cried the captain.

"Hallo!" repeated West, "stop there, or we fire on the first who goes a step farther!"

Both threatened the men with their pistols. The boatswain pointed his gun at them. I held my rifle, ready to fire.

It was in vain! The frenzied men heard nothing, would not hear anything, and one of them fell, struck by the mate's bullet, just as he was crossing the last block. He was unable to catch on to the bank with his hands, and slipping on the frozen slope, he disappeared in the abyss.

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Was this the beginning of a massacre? Would others let themselves be killed at this place? Would the old hands side with the new-comers?

At that moment I remarked that Hardy, Martin Holt, Francis Bury, and Stern hesitated about coming over to our side, while Hearne, still standing motionless at some distance, gave no encouragement to the rebels.

However, we could not allow them to become masters of the boat to bring it down, to embark ten or twelve men, and to abandon us to our certain fate on this iceberg. They had almost reached the boat, heedless of danger and deaf to threats, when a second report was heard, and one of the sailors fell, by a bullet from the boatswain's gun.

One American and one Fuegian less to be numbered amongst the sealing-master's partisans!

Then, in front of the boat, a man appeared. It was Dirk Peters, who had climbed the opposite slope.

The half-breed put one of his enormous hands on the stern and with the other made a sign to the furious men to clear off. Dirk Peters being there, we no longer needed our arms, as he alone would suffice to protect the boat from danger.

And indeed, as five or six of the sailors were advancing, he went up to them, caught hold of the nearest by the belt, lifted him up, and sent him flying ten paces off. The wretched man not being able to catch hold of anything, would have rebounded into the sea had not Hearne seized him. Owing to the half-breed's intervention the revolt was instantly quelled. Besides, we were coming up to the boat, and with us those of our men whose hesitation had not lasted long.

No matter. The others were still thirteen to our ten.

Captain Len Guy made his appearance; anger shone in his eyes, and with him was West, quite unmoved. Words failed the captain for some moments, but his looks said what his tongue could not utter. At length, in a terrible voice, he said:

"I ought to treat you as evil-doers; however, I will only consider you as madmen. The boat belongs to everybody. It is now our only means of salvation, and you wanted to steal it—to steal it like cowards! Listen attentively to

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what I say for the last time! This boat, belonging to the *Halbrane,* is now the *Halbrane* herself! I am the captain of it, and let him who disobeys me, beware!"

With these last words Captain Len Guy looked at Hearne, for whom this warning was expressly meant. The sealing-master had not appeared in the last scene, not openly at least, but nobody doubted that he had urged his comrades to make off with the boat, and that he had every intention of doing the same again.

"Now to the camp," said the captain, "and you, Dirk Peters, remain here!"

The half-breed's only reply was to nod his big head and betake himself to his post.

The crew returned to the camp without the least hesitation. Some lay down in their sleeping-places, others wandered about. Hearne neither tried to join them nor to go near Martin Holt.

Now that the sailors were reduced to idleness, there was nothing to do except to ponder on our critical situation, and invent some means of getting out of it.

The captain, the mate, and the boatswain formed a council, and I took part in their deliberations.

Captain Len Guy began by saying:

"We have protected our boat, and we shall continue to protect it."

"Until death," declared West.

"Who knows," said I, "whether we shall not soon be forced to embark?"

"In that case," replied the captain, "as all cannot fit into it, it will be necessary to make a selection. Lots shall determine which of us are to go, and I shall not ask to be treated differently from the others."

"We have not come to that, luckily," replied the boatswain. "The iceberg is solid, and there is no fear of its melting before winter."

"No," assented West, "that is not to be feared. What it behooves us to do is, while watching the boat, to keep an eye on the provisions."

"We are lucky," added Hurliguerly, "to have put our cargo in safety. Poor, dear *Halbrane.* She will remain in these seas, like the *Jane,* her elder sister!"

"You are right," replied the captain, "and we have

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provisions for one year, without counting what we may get by fishing."

"And it is so much the more necessary, captain, to keep a close watch, because I have seen some hovering about the spirit casks."

"I will see to that," replied West.

"But," I then asked, "had we not better prepare ourselves for the fact that we may be compelled to winter on this iceberg?"

"May Heaven avert such a terrible probability," replied the captain.

"After all, if it were necessary, we could get through it, Mr. Jeorling," said the boatswain. "We could hollow out sheltering-places in the ice, so as to be able to bear the extreme cold of the pole, and so long as we had sufficient to appease our hunger——"

At this moment the horrid recollection of the *Grampus* came to my mind—the scenes in which Dirk Peters killed Ned Holt, the brother of our sailing-master. Should we ever be in such extremity?

"If our boat could hold us all," said the captain, "with the provisions necessary for a voyage that might last three or four weeks, I would not hestitate to put to sea now and return towards the north."

But I made them observe that we should be obliged to direct our course contrary to wind and current; our schooner herself could hardly have succeeded in doing this. Whilst to continue towards the south——

"Towards the south?" repeated the captain, who looked at me as though he sought to read my thoughts.

"Why not?" I answered. "If the iceberg had not been stopped in its passage, perhaps it would have drifted to some land in that direction, and might not our boat accomplish what it would have done?"

The captain, shaking his head, answered nothing. West also was silent.

"Eh! our iceberg will end by raising its anchor," replied Hurliguerly. "It does not hold to the bottom, like the Falklands or the Kerguelens! So the safest course is to wait, as the boat cannot carry twenty-three, the number of our party."

I dwelt upon the fact that it was not necessary for all

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twenty-three to embark. It would be sufficient, I said, for five or six of us to reconnoiter farther south for twelve or fifteen miles.

"South?" repeated Captain Len Guy.

"Undoubtedly, captain," I added. "You probably know what the geographers frankly admit, that the Antarctic regions are formed by a capped continent."

"Geographers know nothing, and can know nothing about it," replied West, coldly.

"It is a pity," said I, "that as we are so near, we should not attempt to solve this question of a polar continent."

I thought it better not to insist just at present.

Moreover there would be danger in sending out our only boat on a voyage of discovery, as the current might carry it too far, or it might not find us again in the same place. And, indeed, if the iceberg happened to get loose at the bottom, and to resume its interrupted drift, what would become of the men in the boat?

The drawback was that the boat was too small to carry us all, with the necessary provisions. Now, of the seniors, there remained ten men, counting Dirk Peters; of the new men there were thirteen; twenty-three in all. The largest number our boat could hold was from eleven to twelve persons. Then eleven of us, indicated by lot, would have to remain on this island of ice. And what would become of them?

With regard to this Hurliguerly made a sound observation. "After all," he said, "I don't know that those who would embark would be better off than those who remained! I am so doubtful of the result, that I would willingly give up my place to anyone who wanted it."

Perhaps the boatswain was right. But in my own mind, when I asked that the boat might be utilized, it was only for the purpose of reconnoitering the iceberg.

We finally decided to arrange everything with a view to wintering out, even were our ice-mountain again to drift.

"We may be sure that will be agreed to by our men," declared Hurliguerly.

"What is necessary must be done," replied the mate, "and to-day we must set to work."

I could not tell how long I had been sleeping that night

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nor what time it was, when I found myself rolling on the ground after a violent shock.

What could be happening? Was it another capsize of the iceberg?

We were all up in a second, then outside the tents in the full light of a night in the polar regions.

A second floating mass of enormous size had just struck our iceberg, which had "hoisted the anchor" (as the sailors say) and was drifting towards the south.

An unhoped-for change in the situation had taken place. What were to be the consequences of our being no longer cast away at that place? The current was now carrying us in the direction of the pole? The first feeling of joy inspired by this conviction was, however, succeeded by all the terrors of the unknown! and what an unknown!

Dirk Peters only was entirely rejoiced that we had resumed the route which, he believed, would lead us to the discovery of traces of his "poor Pym"—far other ideas occupied the minds of his companions.

Captain Len Guy no longer entertained any hope of rescuing his countrymen, and having reached the condition of despair, he was bound by his duty to take his crew back to the north, so as to clear the Antarctic circle while the season rendered it possible to do so. And we were being carried away towards the south!

Naturally enough, we were all deeply impressed by the fearfulness of our position, which may be summed up in a few words. We were no longer cast away, with a possible ship, but the tenants of a floating iceberg, with no hope but that our monster tenement might encounter one of the whaling ships whose business in the deep waters lies between the Orkneys, New Georgia, and the Sandwich Islands. A quantity of things had been thrown into the ice by the collision which had set our iceberg afloat, but these were chiefly articles belonging to the *Halbrane*. Owing to the precaution that had been taken on the previous day, when the cargo was stowed away in the clefts, it had been only slightly damaged. What would have become of us, had all our reserves been swallowed up in that grim encounter?

Now, the two icebergs formed but one, which was traveling south at the rate of two miles an hour. At this rate,

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thirty hours would suffice to bring us to the point of the axis at which the terrestrial meridians unite. Did the current which was carrying us along pass on to the pole itself, or was there any land which might arrest our progress? This was another question, and I discussed it with the boatswain.

"Nobody knows, Mr. Jeorling," was Hurliguerly's reply. "If the current goes to the pole, we shall go there; and if it doesn't, we shan't. An iceberg isn't a ship, and as it has neither sails nor helm, it goes as the drift takes it."

"That's true, boatswain. And therefore I had the idea that if two or three of us were to embark in the boat——"

"Ah! you still hold to your notion of the boat——"

"Certainly, for, if there is land somewhere, is it not possible that the people of the *Jane*——"

"Have come upon it, Mr. Jeorling—at four hundred miles from Tsalal Island."

"Who knows, boatswain?"

"That may be, but allow me to say that your argument will be reasonable when the land comes in sight, if it ever does so. Our captain will see what ought to be done, and he will remember that time presses. We cannot delay in these waters, and, after all, the one thing of real importance to us is to get out of the polar circle before the winter makes it impassable."

There was good sense in Hurliguerly's words; I could not deny the fact.

During that day the greater part of the cargo was placed in the interior of a vast cave-like fissure in the side of the iceberg, where, even in case of a second collision, casks and barrels would be in safety. Our men then assisted Endicott to set up his cooking-stove between two blocks, so that it was firmly fixed, and they heaped up a great mass of coals close to it.

No murmurs, no recrimination disturbed these labors. It was evident that silence was deliberately maintained. The crew obeyed the captain and West because they gave no orders but such as were of urgent necessity. But, afterwards, would these men allow the authority of their leaders to be uncontested? How long would the recruits from the Falklands, who were already exasperated by the dis-

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asters of our enterprise, resist their desire to seize upon the boat and escape?

I did not think they would make the attempt, however, so long as our iceberg should continue to drift, for the boat could not outstrip its progress; but, if it were to run aground once more, to strike upon the coast of an island or a continent, what would not these unfortunate creatures do to escape the horrors of wintering under such conditions?

In the afternoon, during the hour of rest allowed to the crew, I had a second conversation with Dirk Peters. I had taken my customary seat at the top of the iceberg, and had occupied it for half an hour, being, as may be supposed, deep in thought, when I saw the half-breed coming quickly up the slope. We had exchanged hardly a dozen words since the iceberg had begun to move again. When Dirk Peters came up to me, he did not address me at first, and was so intent on his thoughts that I was not quite sure he saw me. At length, he leaned back against an ice-block, and spoke:

"Mr. Jeorling," he said, "you remember, in your cabin in the *Halbrane*, I told you the—the affair of the *Grampus?*"

I remembered well.

"I told you that Parker's name was not Parker, that it was Holt, and that he was Ned Holt's brother?"

"I know, Dirk Peters," I replied, "but why do you refer to that sad story again?"

"Why, Mr. Jeorling? Have not—have you never said anything about it to anybody?"

"Not to anybody," I protested. "How could you suppose I should be so ill-advised, so imprudent, as to divulge your secret, a secret which ought never to pass our lips—a dead secret?"

"Dead, yes, dead! And yet, understand me, it seems to me that, among the crew, something is known."

I instantly recalled to mind what the boatswain had told me concerning a certain conversation in which he had overheard Hearne prompting Martin Holt to ask the half-breed what were the circumstances of his brother's death on board the *Grampus*. Had a portion of the secret got out, or was this apprehension on the part of Dirk Peters purely imaginary?

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"Explain yourself," I said.

"Understand me, Mr. Jeorling, I am a bad hand at explaining. Yes, yesterday—I have thought of nothing else since—Martin Holt took me aside, far from the others, and told me that he wished to speak to me——"

"Of the *Grampus?*"

"Of the *Grampus*—yes, and of his brother, Ned Holt. For the first time he uttered that name before me—and yet we have sailed together for nearly three months."

The half-breed's voice was so changed that I could hardly hear him.

"It seemed to me," he resumed, "that in Martin Holt's mind—no, I was not mistaken—there was something like a suspicion."

"But tell me what he said! Tell me exactly what he asked you. What is it?"

I felt sure that the question put by Martin Holt, whatsoever its bearing, had been inspired by Hearne. Nevertheless, as I considered it well that the half-breed should know nothing of the sealing-master's disquieting and inexplicable intervention in this tragic affair, I decided upon concealing it from him.

"He asked me," replied Dirk Peters, "did I not remember Ned Holt of the *Grampus,* and whether he had perished in the fight with the mutineers or in the shipwreck; whether he was one of the men who had been abandoned with Captain Barnard; in short, he asked me if I could tell him how his brother died. Ah! how!"

No idea could be conveyed of the horror with which the half-breed uttered words which revealed a profound loathing of himself.

"And what answer did you make to Martin Holt?"

"None, none!"

"You should have said that Ned Holt perished in the wreck of the brig."

"I could not—understand me—I could not. The two brothers are so like each other. In Martin Holt I seemed to see Ned Holt. I was afraid, I got away from him."

The half-breed drew himself up with a sudden movement, and I sat thinking, leaning my head on my hands. These tardy questions of Holt's respecting his brother were put, I had no doubt whatsoever, at the instigation of

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Hearne, but what was his motive, and was it at the Falklands that he had discovered the secret of Dirk Peters? I had not breathed a word on the subject to anyone. To the second question no answer suggested itself; the first involved a serious issue. Did the sealing-master merely desire to gratify his enmity against Dirk Peters, the only one of the Falkland sailors who had always taken the side of Captain Len Guy, and who had prevented the seizure of the boat by Hearne and his companions? Did he hope, by arousing the wrath and vengeance of Martin Holt to detach the sailing-master from his allegiance and induce him to become an accomplice in Hearne's own designs? And, in fact, when it was a question of sailing the boat in these seas, had he not imperative need of Martin Holt, one of the best seamen of the *Halbrane?* A man who would succeed where Hearne and his companions would fail, if they had only themselves to depend on?

I became lost in this labyrinth of hypotheses, and it must be admitted that its complications added largely to the troubles of an already complicated position.

When I raised my eyes, Dirk Peters had disappeared; he had said what he came to say, and he now knew that I had not betrayed his confidence.

The customary precautions were taken for the night, no individual being allowed to remain outside the camp, with the exception of the half-breed, who was in charge of the boat.

The following day was the 31st of January. I pushed back the canvas of the tent, which I shared with Captain Len Guy and West respectively, as each succeeded the other on release from the alternate "watch," very early, and experienced a severe disappointment.

Mist everywhere! Nay, more than mist, a thick, yellow, moldy-smelling fog. And more than this again: the temperature had fallen sensibly: this was probably a forewarning of the austral winter. The summit of our ice-mountain was lost in vapor, in a fog which would not resolve itself into rain, but would continue to muffle up the horizon.

"Bad luck!" said the boatswain, "for now if we were to pass by land we should not perceive it."

"And our drift?"

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"More considerable than yesterday, Mr. Jeorling. The captain has sounded, and he makes the speed at no less than between three and four miles."

"And what do you conclude from this?"

"I conclude that we must be within a narrower sea, since the current is so strong. I should not be surprised if we had land on both sides of us within ten or fifteen miles."

"This, then, would be a wide strait that cuts the Antarctic continent?"

"Yes. Our captain is of that opinion."

"And, holding that opinion, is he not going to make an attempt to reach one or other of the coasts of this strait?"

"And how?"

"With the boat."

"Risk the boat in the midst of this fog!" exclaimed the boatswain, as he crossed his arms. "What are you thinking of, Mr. Jeorling? Can we cast anchor to wait for it? And all the chances would be that we should never see it again. Ah! if we only had the *Halbrane!*"

But there was no longer a *Halbrane!*

In spite of the difficulty of the ascent through the half-condensed vapor, I climbed up to the top of the iceberg, but when I had gained that eminence I strove in vain to pierce the impenetrable gray mantle in which the waters were wrapped.

I remained there, hustled by the northeast wind, which was beginning to blow freshly and might perhaps rend the fog asunder. But no, fresh vapors accumulated around our floating refuge, driven up by the immense ventilation of the open sea. Under the double action of the atmospheric and Antarctic currents, we drifted more and more rapidly, and I perceived a sort of shudder pass throughout the vast bulk of the iceberg.

Then it was that I felt myself under the dominion of a sort of hallucination, one of those hallucinations which must have troubled the mind of Arthur Pym. It seemed to me that I was losing myself in his extraordinary personality; at last I was beholding all that he had seen! Was not that impenetrable mist the curtain of vapors which he had seen in his delirium? I peered into it, seeking for

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those luminous rays which had streaked the sky from east to west! I sought in its depths for that limitless cataract, rolling in silence from the height of some immense rampart, lost in the vastness of the zenith! I sought for the awful white giant of the South Pole!

At length reason resumed her sway. This visionary madness, intoxicating while it lasted, passed off by degrees, and I descended the slope to our camp.

The whole day passed without a change. The fog never once lifted to give us a glimpse outside of its muffling folds, and if the iceberg, which had traveled forty miles since the previous day, had passed by the extremity of the axis of the earth, we should never know it.

CHAPTER XI

AMID THE MISTS

THE mist did not lift during the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th of February, and it would have been difficult to make out the rate of progress of our iceberg since it had passed the pole. Captain Len Guy, however, and West, considered themselves safe in reckoning it at two hundred and fifty miles.

The current did not seem to have diminished in speed or changed its course. It was now beyond a doubt that we were moving between the two halves of a continent, one on the east, the other on the west, which formed the vast Antarctic region. And I thought it was matter of great regret that we could not get aground on one or the other side of this vast strait, whose surface would presently be solidified by the coming of winter.

When I expressed this sentiment to Captain Len Guy, he made me the only logical answer:

"What would you have, Mr. Jeorling? We are powerless. There is nothing to be done, and the persistent fog is the worst part of our ill luck. I no longer know where we are. It is impossible to take an observation, and just as the sun is about to disappear for many long months."

"Let me come back to the question of the boat," said I, "for the last time. Could we not, with the boat——"

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"Go on a discovery cruise? Can you think of such a thing? That would be an imprudence I would not commit, even though the crew would allow me."

I was on the point of exclaiming: "And what if your brother and your countrymen have found refuge on some spot of the land that undoubtedly lies about us?"

But I restrained myself. Of what avail was it to reawaken our captain's grief? He, too, must have contemplated this eventuality, and he had not renounced his purpose of further search without being fully convinced of the folly of a last attempt.

During those three days of fog I had not caught sight of Dirk Peters, or rather he had made no attempt to approach, but had remained inflexibly at his post by the boat. Martin Holt's questions respecting his brother Ned seemed to indicate that his secret was known—at least in part, and the half-breed held himself more than ever aloof, sleeping while the others watched, and watching in their time of sleep. I even wondered whether he regretted having confided in me, and fancied that he had aroused my repugnance by his sad story. If so, he was mistaken; I deeply pitied the poor half-breed.

Nothing could exceed the melancholy monotony of the hours which we passed in the midst of a fog so thick that the wind could not lift its curtain. The position of the iceberg could not be ascertained. It went with the current at a like speed, and had it been motionless, there would have been no appreciable difference for us, for the wind had fallen—at least, so we supposed—and not a breath was stirring. The flame of a torch held up in the air did not flicker. The silence of space was broken only by the clangor of the sea-birds, which came in muffled croaking tones through the stifling atmosphere of vapor. Petrels and albatross swept the top of the iceberg, where they kept a useless watch in their flight. In what direction were those swift-winged creatures—perhaps already driven towards the confines of the Arctic region by the approach of winter—bound? We could not tell. One day, the boatswain, who was determined to solve this question if possible, having mounted to the extreme top, not without risk of breaking his neck, came into such violent contact with a *quebranta huesos*—a sort of gigantic petrel meas-

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uring twelve feet with spread wings—that he was flung on his back.

"Curse the bird!" he said on his return to the camp, addressing the observation to me. "I have had a narrow escape! A thump, and down I went, sprawling. I saved myself I don't know how, for I was all but over the side. Those ice ledges, you know, slip through one's fingers like water. I called out to the bird, 'Can't you even look before you, you fool?' But what was the good of that? The big blunderer did not even beg my pardon!"

In the afternoon of the same day our ears were assailed by a hideous braying from below. Hurliguerly remarked that as there were no asses to treat us to the concert, it must be given by penguins. Hitherto these countless dwellers in the polar regions had not thought proper to accompany us on our moving island; we had not seen even one, either at the foot of the iceberg or on the drifting packs. There could be no doubt that they were there in thousands, for the music was unmistakably that of a multitude of performers. Now those birds frequent by choice the edges of the coasts of islands and continents in high latitudes, or the ice-fields in their neighborhood. Was not their presence an indication that land was near?

I asked Captain Len Guy what he thought of the presence of these birds.

"I think what you think, Mr. Jeorling," he replied. "Since we have been drifting, none of them have taken refuge on the iceberg, and here they are now in crowds, if we may judge by their deafening cries. From whence do they come?"

At nine o'clock next morning the iceberg doffed its cap of vapor quite suddenly, producing an indescribable transformation scene which no fairy's wand could have accomplished in less time or with greater success.

In a few moments, the sky was clear to the extreme verge of the horizon, and the sea reappeared, illumined by the oblique rays of the sun, which now rose only a few degrees above it. A rolling swell of the waves bathed the base of our iceberg in white foam, as it drifted, together with a great multitude of floating mountains under the double action of wind and current, on a course inclining to the nor'-nor'-east.

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"Land!"

This cry came from the summit of the moving mountain, and Dirk Peters was revealed to our sight, standing on the outermost block, his hand stretched towards the north.

The half-breed was not mistaken. The land this time—yes!—it was land! Its distant heights, of a blackish hue, rose within three or four miles of us. 86° 12′ south latitude. 114° 17′ east longitude.

The iceberg was nearly four degrees beyond the Antarctic pole, and from the western longitudes that our schooner had followed tracing the course of the *Jane*, we had passed into the eastern longitudes.

The land on the north evidently formed a continent or island of considerable extent. On the west there was a sharply projecting cape, surmounted by a sloping height which resembled an enormous seal's head on the side view; then beyond that was a wide stretch of sea. On the east the land was prolonged out of sight.

Each one of us took in the position. It depended on the current whether it would carry the iceberg into an eddy which might drive it on the coast, or continue to drift it towards the north.

Which was the more admissible hypothesis?

Captain Len Guy, West, Hurliguerly, and I talked over the matter, while the crew discussed it among themselves. Finally, it was agreed that the current tended rather to carry the iceberg towards the northern point of land.

"After all," said Captain Len Guy, "if it is habitable during the months of the summer season, it does not look like being inhabited, since we cannot descry a human being on the shore."

"I acknowledge that—barrenness and desolation, that is all. Nevertheless, I want to ask you whether it is your intention to go ashore, captain?"

"With the boat?"

"With the boat, should the current carry our iceberg away from the land."

"We have not an hour to lose, Mr. Jeorling, and the delay of a few hours might condemn us to a cruel winter stay, if we arrived too late at the iceberg barrier."

"And, considering the distance, we are not too soon," observed West.

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"I grant it," I replied, still persisting. "But, to leave this land behind us without ever having set foot on it, without having made sure that it does not preserve the traces of an encampment, if your brother, captain—his companions——"

Captain Len Guy shook his head. How could the castaways have supported life in this desolate region for several months?

Besides, the British flag was hoisted on the summit of the iceberg, and William Guy would have recognized it and come down to the shore had he been living.

At five in the afternoon, the iceberg plunged into a deep rift in the coast ending in a long point on the right, and there stuck fast.

"On shore! On shore!" burst from every man, like a single exclamation, and the men were already hurrying down the slope of the iceberg, when West commanded: "Wait for orders!"

Some hesitation was shown—especially on the part of Hearne and several of his comrades. Then the instinct of discipline prevailed, and finally the whole crew ranged themselves around Captain Len Guy. It was not necessary to lower the boat, the iceberg being in contact with the point.

The captain, the boatswain, and myself, preceding the others, were the first to quit the camp; ours were the first human feet to tread this virgin and volcanic soil.

We walked for twenty minutes on rough land, strewn with rocks of igneous origin, solidified lava, dusty slag, and gray ashes, but without enough clay to grow even the hardiest plants.

With some risk and difficulty, Captain Len Guy, the boatswain, and I succeeded in climbing the hill; this exploit occupied a whole hour. Although evening had now come, it brought no darkness in its train. From the top of the hill we could see over an extent of from thirty to forty miles, and this was what we saw.

Behind us lay the open sea, laden with floating masses; a great number of these had recently heaped themselves up against the beach and rendered it almost wholly inaccessible.

On the west was a strip of hilly land, which extended

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beyond our sight, and was washed on its east side by a boundless sea. It was evident that we had been carried by the drift through a strait.

Ah! if we had only had our *Halbrane!* But our sole possession was a frail craft barely capable of containing a dozen men, and we were twenty-three!

There was nothing for it but to go down to the shore again, to carry the tents to the beach, and take measures in view of a winter sojourn under the terrible conditions imposed upon us by circumstances.

On our return to the coast the boatswain discovered several caverns in the granitic cliffs, sufficiently spacious to house us all and afford storage for the cargo of the *Halbrane.* Whatever might be our ultimate decision, we could not do better than place our material and install ourselves in this opportune shelter.

After we had reascended the slopes of the iceberg and reached our camp, Captain Len Guy had the men mustered. The only missing man was Dirk Peters, who had decidedly isolated himself from the crew. There was nothing to fear from him, however; he would be with the faithful against the mutinous, and under all circumstances we might count upon him. When the circle had been formed, Captain Len Guy spoke, without allowing any sign of discouragement to appear, and explained the position with the utmost frankness and lucidity, stating in the first place that it was absolutely necessary to lower the cargo to the coast and stow it away in one of the caverns. Concerning the vital question of food, he stated that the supply of flour, preserved meat, and dried vegetables would suffice for the winter, however prolonged, and on that of fuel he was satisfied that we should not want for coal, provided it was not wasted; and it would be possible to economize it, as the hibernating waifs might brave the cold of the polar zone under a covering of snow and a roof of ice.

Was the captain's tone of security feigned? I did not think so, especially as West approved of what he said.

A third question raised by Hearne remained, and was well calculated to arouse jealousy and anger among the crew. It was the question of the use to be made of the only craft remaining to us. Ought the boat to be kept

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for the needs of our hibernation, or used to enable us to return to the iceberg barrier?

Captain Len Guy would not pronounce upon this; he desired to postpone the decision for twenty-four or forty-eight hours. The boat, carrying the provisions necessary for such a voyage, could not accommodate more than eleven or, at the outside, twelve men. If the departure of the boat were agreed to, then its passengers must be selected by lot. The captain proceeded to state that neither West, the boatswain, I, nor he would claim any privilege, but would submit to the fortune of the lot with all the others. Both Martin Holt and Hardy were perfectly capable of taking the boat to the fishing-grounds, where the whalers would still be found. Then, those to whom the lot should fall were not to forget their comrades, left to winter on the eighty-sixth parallel, and were to send a ship to take them off at the return of summer.

All this was said in a tone as calm as it was firm. I must do Captain Len Guy the justice to say that he rose to the occasion.

When he had concluded—without any interruption even from Hearne—no one made a remark. There was, indeed, none to be made, since, in the given case, lots were to be drawn under conditions of perfect equality.

The hour of rest having arrived, each man entered the camp, partook of the supper prepared by Endicott, and went to sleep for the last time under the tents.

On the following day, the 7th of February, everybody set to work early with a will. The boat was let down with all due precaution to the base of the iceberg, and drawn up by the men on a little sandy beach out of reach of the water. It was in perfectly good condition, and thoroughly serviceable.

Our occupation continued on the 8th, 9th, and 10th February, and our task was finished in the afternoon of the 10th. The cargo was safely stowed in the interior of a large grotto, with access to it by a narrow opening. We were to inhabit the adjoining grotto, and Endicott set up his kitchen in the latter, on the advice of the boatswain. Thus we should profit by the heat of the stove, which was to cook our food and warm the cavern during the long days, or rather the long nights of the austral winter.

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During the process of housing and storing, I observed nothing to arouse suspicion in the bearing of Hearne and the Falklands men. Nevertheless, the half-breed was kept on guard at the boat, which might easily have been seized upon the beach.

I had been asleep for some hours on the last night, when I was awakened by a great shouting at a short distance. I sprang up instantly and darted out of the cavern, simultaneously with the captain and West, who had also been suddenly aroused from sleep.

"The boat! the boat!" cried West.

The boat was no longer in its place—that place so jealously guarded by Dirk Peters. They had pushed the boat into the sea, three men had got into it with bales and casks, while ten others strove to control the half-breed.

Hearne was there, and Martin Holt also; the latter, it seemed to me, was not interfering.

These wretches, then, intended to depart before the lots were drawn; they meant to forsake us. They had succeeded in surprising Dirk Peters, and they would have killed him, had he not fought hard for life.

In the face of this mutiny, knowing our inferiority of numbers, and not knowing whether he might count on all the old crew, Captain Len Guy re-entered the cavern with West in order to procure arms. Hearne and his accomplices were armed.

I was about to follow them when the following words arrested my steps. The half-breed, overpowered by numbers, had been knocked down, and at this moment Martin Holt, in gratitude to the man who saved his life, was rushing to his aid, but Hearne called out to him, "Leave the fellow alone, and come with us!"

Martin Holt hesitated.

"Yes, leave him alone, I say; leave Dirk Peters, the assassin of your brother, alone."

"The assassin of my brother!"

"Your brother, killed on board the *Grampus*——"

"Killed! by Dirk Peters?"

"Yes! Killed and eaten—eaten—eaten!" repeated Hearne, who pronounced the hateful words with a kind of howl. And then, at a sign from Hearne, two of his comrades seized Martin Holt and dragged him into the boat.

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Hearne was instantly followed by all those whom he had induced to join in this criminal deed.

At that moment Dirk Peters rose from the ground, and sprang upon one of the Falklands men as he was in the act of stepping on the platform of the boat, lifted him up bodily, hurled him round his head and dashed his brains out against a rock. In an instant the half-breed fell, shot in the shoulder by a bullet from Hearne's pistol, and the boat was pushed off.

Then Captain Len Guy and West came out of the cavern—the whole scene had passed in less than a minute—and ran down to the point, which they reached together with the boatswain, Hardy, Francis, and Stern.

The boat, which was drawn by the current, was already some distance off, and the tide was falling rapidly.

West shouldered his gun and fired; a sailor dropped into the bottom of the boat. A second shot, fired by Captain Len Guy, grazed Hearne's breast, and the ball was lost among the ice-blocks at the moment when the boat disappeared behind the iceberg.

The only thing for us to do was to cross to the other side of the point. The current would carry the wretches thither, no doubt, before it bore them northward. If they passed within range, and if a second shot should hit Hearne, either killing or wounding him, his companions might perhaps decide on coming back to us.

A quarter of an hour elapsed. When the boat appeared at the other side of the point, it was so far off that our bullets could not reach it. Hearne had already had the sail set, and the boat, impelled by wind and current jointly, was soon no more than a white speck on the face of the waters, and speedily disappeared.

CHAPTER XII

FOUND AT LAST

THE question of our wintering on the land whereon we had been thrown was settled for us. But, after all, the situation was not changed for those among the nine (now only remaining of the twenty-three) who should not have drawn the lot of departure. Who could speculate upon the

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chances of the whole nine? Might not all of them have drawn the lot of "stay"? And, when every chance was fully weighed, was that of those who had left us the best? To this question there could be no answer.

When the boat had disappeared, Captain Len Guy and his companions retraced their steps towards the cavern in which we must live for all the time during which we could not go out, in the dread darkness of the Antarctic winter. My first thought was of Dirk Peters, who, being wounded, could not follow us when we hurried to the other side of the point.

On reaching the cavern I failed to find the half-breed. Was he severely wounded? Should we have to mourn the death of this man who was as faithful to us as to his "poor Pym"?

"Let us search for him, Mr. Jeorling!" cried the boatswain.

"We will go together," said the captain. "Peters would never have forsaken us, and we will not forsake him."

"Would he come back," said I, "now that what he thought was known to him and me only has come out?"

I informed my companions of the reason why the name of Ned Holt had been changed to that of Parker in Arthur Pym's narrative, and of the circumstances under which the half-breed had apprised me of the fact. At the same time I urged every consideration that might exculpate him, dwelling in particular upon the point that if the lot had fallen to Dirk Peters, he would have been the victim of the others' hunger.

"Dirk Peters confided this secret to you only?" inquired Captain Len Guy.

"To me only, captain."

"And you have kept it?"

"Absolutely."

"Then I cannot understand how it came to the knowledge of Hearne."

"At first," I replied, "I thought Peters might have talked in his sleep, and that it was by chance Martin Holt learned the secret. After reflection, however, I recalled to mind that when the half-breed related the scene on the *Grampus* to me, he was in my cabin, and the side sash was raised. I have reason to think that the man at the wheel

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overhead our conversation. Now that man was Hearne, who, in order to hear it more clearly, let go the wheel, so that the *Halbrane* lurched——"

"I remember," said West, "I questioned the fellow sharply, and sent him down into the hold."

"Well, then, captain," I resumed, "it was from that day that Hearne made up to Martin Holt. Hurliguerly called my attention to the fact."

"Of course he did," said the boatswain, "for Hearne, not being capable of managing the boat which he intended to seize, required a master-hand like Holt."

"And so," I said, "he kept on urging Holt to question the half-breed concerning his brother's fate, and you know how Holt came at last to learn the fearful truth. Martin Holt seemed to be stupefied by the revelation. The others dragged him away, and now he is with them!" We were all agreed that things had happened as I supposed, and now the question was, did Dirk Peters, in his present state of mind, mean to absent himself? Would he consent to resume his place among us?

We all left the cavern, and after an hour's search we came in sight of Dirk Peters, whose first impulse was to escape from us. At length, however, Hurliguerly and Francis came up with him. He stood still and made no resistance. I advanced and spoke to him, the others did the same. Captain Len Guy offered him his hand, which he took after a moment's hesitation. Then, without uttering a single word, he returned towards the beach.

From that day no allusion was ever made to the tragic story of the *Grampus*. Dirk Peters' wound proved to be slight; he merely wrapped a piece of sailcloth round the injured arm, and went off to his work with entire unconcern.

We made all the preparation in our power for a prolonged hibernation. Winter was threatening us. For some days past the sun hardly showed at all through the mists. The temperature fell to 36 degrees and would rise no more, while the solar rays, casting shadows of endless length upon the soil, gave hardly any heat. The captain made us put on warm woolen clothes without waiting for the cold to become more severe.

Icebergs, packs, streams, and drifts came in greater

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numbers from the south. Some of these struck and stayed upon the coast, which was already heaped up with ice, but the greater number disappeared in the direction of the northeast.

"All these pieces," said the boatswain, "will go to the closing up of the iceberg wall. If Hearne and his lot of scoundrels are not ahead of them, I imagine they will find the door shut, and as they have no key to open it with——"

"I suppose you think, boatswain, that our case is less desperate than theirs?"

"I do think so, Mr. Jeorling, and I have always thought so. If everything had been done as it was settled, and the lot had fallen to me to go with the boat, I would have given up my turn to one of the others. After all, there is something in feeling dry ground under your feet. I don't wish the death of anybody, but if Hearne and his friends do not succeed in clearing the iceberg barrier—if they are doomed to pass the winter on the ice, reduced for food to a supply that will only last a few weeks, you know the fate that awaits them!"

"Yes, a fate worse than ours!"

"And besides," said the boatswain, "even supposing they do reach the Antarctic Circle. If the whalers have already left the fishing-grounds, it is not a laden and overladen craft that will keep the sea until the Australian coasts are in sight."

This was my own opinion, and also that of the captain and West.

During the following four days, we completed the storage of the whole of our belongings, and made some excursions into the interior of the country, finding "all barren," and not a trace that any landing had ever been made there.

One day, Captain Len Guy proposed that we should give a geographical name to the region whither the iceberg had carried us. It was named Halbrane Land, in memory of our schooner, and we called the strait that separated the two parts of the polar continent the Jane Sound.

Then we took to shooting the penguins which swarmed upon the rocks, and to capturing some of the amphibious animals which frequented the beach. We began to feel the want of fresh meat, and Endicott's cooking rendered

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seal and walrus flesh quite palatable. Besides, the fat of these creatures would serve, at need, to warm the cavern and feed the cooking-stove. Our most formidable enemy would be the cold, and we must fight it by every means within our power. It remained to be seen whether the amphibia would not forsake Halbrane Land at the approach of winter, and seek a less rigorous climate in lower latitudes. Fortunately there were hundreds of other animals to secure our little company from hunger, and even from thirst, at need. The beach was the home of numbers of galapagos—a kind of turtle so called from an archipelago in the equinoctial sea, where also they abound, and mentioned by Arthur Pym as supplying food to the islanders. It will be remembered that Pym and Peters found three of these galapagos in the native boat which carried them away from Tsalal Island.

On the 19th of February an incident occurred—an incident which those who acknowledge the intervention of Providence in human affairs will recognize as providential.

It was eight o'clock in the morning; the weather was calm; the sky was tolerably clear; the thermometer stood at thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit. We were in the cavern, with the exception of the boatswain, waiting for our breakfast, which Endicott was preparing, and were about to take our places at table, when we heard a call from outside.

The voice was Hurliguerly's, and we hurried out. On seeing us, he cried, "Come—come quickly!"

He was standing on a rock at the foot of the hillock above the beach in which Halbrane Land ended beyond the point, and his right hand was stretched out towards the sea.

"What is it?" asked Captain Len Guy.

"A boat."

"Is it the *Halbrane's* boat coming back?"

"No, captain—it is not."

Then we perceived a boat, not to be mistaken for that of our schooner in form or dimensions, drifting without oars or paddle, seemingly abandoned to the current.

We had but one idea in common—to seize at any cost upon this derelict craft, which would, perhaps, prove our salvation. But how were we to reach it? how were we to get it in to the point of Halbrane Land?

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While we were looking distractedly at the boat and at each other, there came a sudden splash at the end of the hillock, as though a body had fallen into the sea.

It was Dirk Peters, who, having flung off his clothes, had sprung from the top of a rock, and was swimming rapidly towards the boat before we made him out.

We cheered him heartily. I never beheld anything like that swimming. He bounded through the waves like a porpoise, and indeed he possessed the strength of one. What might not be expected of such a man!

In a few minutes the half-breed had swum several cables' lengths towards the boat in an oblique direction. We could only see his head like a black speck on the surface of the rolling waves. A period of suspense, of intense watching of the brave swimmer succeeded. Surely, surely he would reach the boat; but must he not be carried away with it? Was it to be believed that even his great strength would enable him, swimming, to tow it to the beach?

"After all, why should there not be oars in the boat?" said the boatswain.

"He has it! He has it! Hurrah, Dirk, hurrah!" shouted Hurliguerly, and Endicott echoed his exultant cheer.

The half-breed had, in fact, reached the boat and raised himself alongside, half out of the water. His big, strong hand grasped the side, and at the risk of causing the boat to capsize, he hoisted himself up to the side, stepped over it, and sat down to draw his breath.

Almost instantly a shout reached our ears. It was uttered by Dirk Peters. What had he found? Paddles! It must be so, for we saw him seat himself in the front of the boat, and paddle with all his strength in striving to get out of the current.

"Come along!" said the captain, and, turning the base of the hillock, we all ran along the edge of the beach between the blackish stones that bestrewed it.

After some time, West stopped us. The boat had reached the shelter of a small projection at that place, and it was evident that it would be run ashore there.

When it was within five or six cables' lengths, and the eddy was helping it on, Dirk Peters let go the paddles,

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stooped towards the after-part of the boat, and then raised himself, holding up an inert body.

An agonized cry from Captain Len Guy rent the air!

"My brother—my brother!"

"He is living! He is living!" shouted Dirk Peters.

A moment later, the boat had touched the beach, and Captain Len Guy held his brother in his arms.

Three of William Guy's companions lay apparently lifeless in the bottom of the boat. And these four men were all that remained of the crew of the *Jane*.

CHAPTER XIII

ELEVEN YEARS IN A FEW PAGES

We carried our treasure-trove to the cavern, and had the happiness of restoring all four men to life. In reality, it was hunger, nothing but hunger, which had reduced the poor fellows to the semblance of death.

. . . . .

On the 8th of February, 1828, the crew of the *Jane*, having no reason to doubt the good faith of the population of Tsalal Island, or that of their chief, Too-Wit, disembarked, in order to visit the village of Klock-Klock, having previously put the schooner into a state of defence, leaving six men on board.

The crew, counting William Guy, the captain, Arthur Pym, and Dirk Peters, formed a body of thirty-two men, armed with guns, pistols, and knives. The dog Tiger accompanied them.

On reaching the narrow gorge leading to the village, preceded and followed by the numerous warriors of Too-Wit, the little company divided, Arthur Pym, Dirk Peters, and Allen (the sailor) entering a cleft in the hill-side, with the intention of crossing it to the other side. From that moment their companions were never to see them more. After a short interval a shock was felt. The opposite hill fell down in a vast heap, burying William Guy and his twenty-eight companions.

Twenty-two of these unfortunate men were crushed to death on the instant, and their bodies would never be found under that mass of earth. Seven, miraculously sheltered

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in the depth of a great cleft of the hill, had survived the catastrophe. These were William Guy, Patterson, Roberts, Covin, Trinkle, also Forbes and Sexton, since dead. As for Tiger, they knew not whether he had perished in the landslip, or whether he had escaped. There existed in the right side of the hill, as well as in the left, on either side of the fissure, certain winding passages, and it was by crawling along these in the darkness that William Guy, Patterson, and the others reached a cavity which let in light and air in abundance. From this shelter they beheld the attack on the *Jane* by sixty pirogues, the defense made by the six men on board, the invasion of the ship by the savages, and finally the explosion which caused the death of a vast number of natives as well as the complete destruction of the ship.

Too-Wit and the Tsalal islanders were at first terrified by the effects of this explosion, but probably still more disappointed. Their instincts of pillage could not be gratified, because some valueless wreckage was all that remained of the ship and her cargo, and they had no reason to suppose that any of the crew had survived the cleverly-contrived collapse of the hill. Hence it came about that Arthur Pym and Dirk Peters on the one side, and William Guy and his companions on the other, were enabled to remain undisturbed in the labyrinths of Klock-Klock, where they fed on the flesh of bitterns—these they could catch with their hands—and the fruit of the nut-trees which grow on the hill sides. They procured fire by rubbing pieces of soft against pieces of hard wood; there was a quantity of both within their reach.

On the 22nd of February, in the morning, William Guy and Patterson were talking together, in terrible perplexity of mind, at the orifice of the cavity that opened upon the country. They no longer knew how to provide for the wants of seven persons, who were then reduced to eating nuts only, and were suffering in consequence from severe pain in the head and stomach. They could see big turtles crawling on the beach, but how could they venture to go thither, with hundreds of natives coming and going about their several occupations, with their constant cry of *tékéli-li?*

Suddenly, this crowd of people became violently agitated.

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Men, women, and children ran wildly about on every side. Some of the savages even took to their boats as though a great danger were at hand.

What was happening? William Guy and his companions were very soon informed. The cause of the tumult was the appearance of an unknown animal, a terrible quadruped, which dashed into the midst of the islanders, snapping at and biting them indiscriminately, as it sprang at their throats with a hoarse growling.

And yet the infuriated animal was alone, and might easily have been killed by stones or arrows. Why then did a crowd of savages manifest such abject terror? Why did they take to flight? Why did they appear incapable of defending themselves against this one beast?

The animal was white, and the sight of it had produced the phenomenon previously observed, that inexplicable terror of whiteness common to all the natives of Tsalal.

To their extreme surprise, William Guy and his companions recognized the strange animal as the dog Tiger. Yes! Tiger had escaped from the crumbling mass of the hill and betaken himself to the interior of the island, whence he had returned to Klock-Klock, to spread terror among the natives. But Tiger was no mere phantom foe; he was the most dangerous and deadly of enemies, for the poor animal was mad, and his fangs were fatal;

This was the reason why the greater part of the Tsalal islanders took to flight. It was under these extraordinary circumstances that they abandoned their island, whither they were destined never to return.

Although the boats carried off the bulk of the population, a considerable number still remained on Tsalal, having no means of escape, and their fate accomplished itself quickly. Several natives who were bitten by Tiger developed hydrophobia rapidly, and attacked the others. Fearful scenes ensued, and are briefly to be summed up in one dismal statement. The bones we had seen in or near Klock-Klock were those of the poor savages, which had lain there bleaching for eleven years!

The poor dog had died, after he had done his fell work, in a corner on the beach, where Dirk Peters found his skeleton and the collar bearing the name of Arthur Pym.

Then, after those natives who could not escape from the

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island had all perished in the manner described, William Guy, Patterson, Trinkle, Covin, Forbes, and Sexton ventured to come out of the labyrinth, where they were on the verge of death by starvation.

What sort of existence was that of the seven survivors of the expedition during the eleven ensuing years? On the whole, it was more endurable than might have been supposed. The natural products of an extremely fertile soil and the presence of a certain number of domestic animals secured them against want of food; they had only to make out the best shelter for themselves they could contrive, and wait for an opportunity of getting away from the island with as much patience as might be granted to them. And from whence could such an opportunity come? Only from one of the many chances within the resources of Providence.

So, then, as William Guy told us, not an incident occurred to break the monotony of that existence of eleven years—not even the reappearance of the islanders, who were kept away from Tsalal by superstitious terror. No danger had threatened them during all that time; but, of course, as it became more and more prolonged, they lost the hope of ever being rescued. At first, with the return of the fine season, when the sea was once more open, they had thought it possible that a ship would be sent in search of the *Jane*. But after four or five years they relinquished all hope.

The month of May corresponds in those regions to the month of November in northern lands—and the ice-packs which the current carried towards the north were beginning in May to drift past Tsalal. One day, one of the seven men failed to return to the cavern. They called, they waited, they searched for him. All was in vain. He did not reappear; no doubt he had been drowned. He was never more seen by his fellow-exiles.

This man was Patterson, the faithful companion of William Guy. Now, what William Guy did not know, but we told him, was that Patterson—under what circumstances none would ever learn—had been carried away on the surface of an ice-block, where he died of hunger. And on that ice-block, which had traveled so far as Prince Edward Island, the boatswain had discovered the corpse of the un-

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fortunate man almost decomposed by the action of the warmer waters.

When Captain Len Guy told his brother of the finding of the body of Patterson, and how it was owing to the notes in his pocket-book that the *Halbrane* had been enabled to proceed towards the Antarctic sea, William Guy hid his face in his hands and wept.

Other misfortunes followed upon this one.

Five months after the disappearance of Patterson, in the middle of October, Tsalal Island was laid waste from coast to coast by an earthquake, which destroyed the southwestern group almost entirely. William Guy and his companions must soon have perished on the barren land, which no longer could give them food, had not the means of leaving its coast, now merely an expanse of tumbled rocks, been afforded them in an almost miraculous manner. Two days after the earthquake, the current carried ashore within a few hundred yards of their cavern a boat which had drifted from the island group on the southwest.

Without the delay of even one day, the boat was laden with as much of the remaining provisions as it could contain, and the six men embarked in it, bidding adieu forever to the now uninhabitable island.

Unfortunately a very strong breeze was blowing; it was impossible to resist it, and the boat was driven southwards by that very same current which had caused our iceberg to drift to the coast of Halbrane Land.

For two months and a half these poor fellows were borne across the open sea, with no control over their course. It was not until the 2d of January in the present year (1840) that they sighted land—east of the Jane Sound.

Now, we already knew this land was not more than fifty miles from Halbrane Land. Yes! so small, relatively, was the distance that separated us from those whom we had sought for in the Antarctic regions far and wide, and concerning whom we had lost hope.

Their boat had gone ashore far to the southeast of us. But on how different a coast from that of Tsalal Island, or, rather, on one how like that of Halbrane Land! Nothing was to be seen but sand and stones; neither trees, shrubs, nor plants of any kind. Their provisions were almost exhausted; William Guy and his companions were soon

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reduced to extreme want, and two of the little company, Forbes and Sexton, died.

The remaining four resolved not to remain a single day longer in the place where they were doomed to die of hunger. They embarked in the boat with the small supply of food still remaining, and once more abandoned themselves to the current, without having been able to verify their position, for want of instruments.

Thus had they been borne upon the unknown deep for twenty-five days, their resources were completely exhausted, and they had not eaten for forty-eight hours, when the boat, with its occupants lying inanimate at the bottom of it, was sighted from Halbrane Land. The rest is already known to the reader of this strange, eventful history.

And now the two brothers were at length reunited in that remote corner of the big world which we had dubbed Halbrane Land.

CHAPTER XIV

"WE WERE THE FIRST"

Two days later not one of the survivors from the two schooners, the *Jane* and the *Halbrane,* remained upon any coast of the Antarctic region.

On the 21st of February, at six o'clock in the morning, the boat, with us all (we numbered thirteen) in it, left the little creek and doubled the point of Halbrane Land. On the previous day we had fully and finally debated the question of our departure, with the understanding that we should start without delay.

The captain of the *Jane* was for an immediate departure, and Captain Len Guy was not opposed to it. I willingly sided with them, and West was of a similar opinion. The boatswain was inclined to oppose us. He considered it imprudent to give up a certainty for the uncertain, and he was backed by Endicott, who would in any case say "ditto" to his "Mr. Burke." However, Hurliguerly conformed to the view of the majority with a good grace, and declared himself quite ready to set out, since we were all of that way of thinking.

Needless to say that the greater part of the cargo of the

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Halbrane was left in our cavern, fully protected from the weather, at the disposal of any shipwrecked people who might chance to be thrown on the coast of Halbrane Land. The boatswain had planted a spar on the top of this slope to attract attention. But, our two schooners notwithstanding, what vessel would ever venture into such latitudes?

Our boat was one of those in use in the Tsalal Archipelago for plying between the islands. We knew, from the narrative of Pym, that these boats are of two kinds, one resembling rafts or flat boats, the other strongly-built. Our boat was of the former kind, forty feet long, six feet in width, and worked by several paddles.

We called our little craft the *Paracuta,* after a fish which abounds in these waters. A rough image of that denizen of the southern deep was cut upon the gunwale.

I desire to lay special stress on the fact that not a single scrap of iron entered into the construction of this boat, not so much as a nail or a bolt, for that metal was entirely unknown to the Tsalal islanders. The planks were bound together by a sort of liana, or creeping-plant, and caulked with moss steeped in pitch, which was turned by the seawater to a substance as hard as metal.

I have nothing special to record during the week that succeeded our departure. The breeze blew steadily from the south, and we did not meet with any unfavorable current between the banks of Jane Sound. During those first eight days, the *Paracuta,* by paddling when the wind fell, had kept up the speed that was indispensable for our reaching the Pacific Ocean within a short time.

The desolate aspect of the land remained the same, while the strait was already visited by floating drifts, packs of one to two hundred feet in length, some oblong, others circular, and also by icebergs which our boat passed easily. We were made anxious, however, by the fact that these masses were proceeding towards the iceberg barrier, for would they not close the passages, which ought to be still open at this time?

I shall mention here that in proportion as Dirk Peters was carried farther and farther from the places wherein no trace of his poor Pym had been found, he was more silent than ever, and no longer even answered me when I addressed him.

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It must not be forgotten that since our iceberg had passed beyond the south pole, we were in the zone of eastern longitudes counted from the zero of Greenwich to the hundred and eightieth degree. All hope must therefore be abandoned of our either touching at the Falklands, or finding whaling-ships in the waters of the Sandwich Islands, the South Orkneys, or South Georgia.

Our voyage proceeded under unaltered conditions for ten days. Our little craft was perfectly seaworthy. The two captains and West fully appreciated its soundness, although, as I have previously said, not a scrap of iron had a place in its construction. It had not once been necessary to repair its seams, so staunch were they. To be sure, the sea was smooth, its long, rolling waves were hardly ruffled on their surface.

On the 10th of March with the same longitude the observation gave 78° 13′ for latitude. The speed of the *Paracuta* had then been thirty miles in each twenty-four hours. If this rate of progress could be maintained for another three weeks, there was every chance of our finding the passes open, and being able to get round the iceberg barrier; also that the whaling-ships would not yet have left the fishing-grounds.

The sun was on the verge of the horizon, and the time was approaching when the Antarctic region would be shrouded in polar night. Fortunately, in reascending towards the north we were getting into waters from whence light was not yet banished. Then did we witness a phenomenon as extraordinary as any of those described by Arthur Pym. For three or four hours, sparks, accompanied by a sharp noise, shot out of our fingers' ends, our hair, and our beards. There was an electric snow-storm, with great flakes falling loosely, and the contact produced this strange luminosity. The sea rose so suddenly and tumbled about so wildly that the *Paracuta* was several times in danger of being swallowed up by the waves, but we got through the mystic-seeming tempest all safe and sound.

Nevertheless, space was thenceforth but imperfectly lighted. Frequent mists came up and bounded our outlook to a few cable-lengths. Extreme watchfulness and caution were necessary to avoid collision with the floating masses

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of ice, which were traveling more slowly than the *Paracuta*. The temperature fell very perceptibly, and no longer rose above twenty-three degrees.

Forty-eight hours later Captain Len Guy and his brother succeeded with great difficulty in taking an approximate observation, with the following results of their calculations:

Longitude: 118° 3′ east.

Latitude: 75° 17′ south.

At this date, therefore (12th of March), the *Paracuta* was distant from the waters of the Antarctic Circle only four hundred miles. During the night a thick fog came on, with a subsidence of the breeze. This was to be regretted, for it increased the risk of collision with the floating ice. Of course fog could not be a surprise to us, being where we were, but what did surprise us was the gradually increasing speed of our boat, although the falling of the wind ought to have lessened it.

This increase of speed could not be due to the current for we were going more quickly than it.

This state of things lasted until morning, without our being able to account for what was happening, when at about ten o'clock the mist began to disperse in the low zones. The coast on the west reappeared—a rocky coast, without a mountainous background; the *Paracuta* was following its line.

And then, no more than a quarter of a mile away, we beheld a huge mound, reared above the plain to a height of three hundred feet, with a circumference of from two to three hundred feet. In its strange form this great mound resembled an enormous sphinx; the body upright, the paws stretched out, crouching in the attitude of the winged monster of Grecian Mythology.

Was this a living animal, a gigantic monster, a mastodon a thousand times the size of those enormous elephants of the polar seas whose remains are still found in the ice? In our frame of mind we might have believed also that the mastodon was about to hurl itself on our little craft and crush it to atoms.

After a few moments of unreasoning and unreasonable fright, we recognized that the strange object was only a great mound, singularly shaped, and that the mist had just rolled off its head, leaving it to stand out and confront us.

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Ah! that sphinx! I remembered, at sight of it, that on the night when the iceberg was overturned and the *Halbrane* was carried away, I had dreamed of a fabulous animal of this kind, seated at the pole of the world, and from whom Edgar Poe only could wrest its secrets.

But our attention was to be attracted, our surprise, even our alarm, was evoked soon by phenomena still more strange than the mysterious earth from upon which the mist-curtain had been raised so suddenly.

I have said that the speed of the *Paracuta* was gradually increasing; now it was excessive, that of the current remaining inferior to it. Now, of a sudden, the grapnel that had belonged to the *Halbrane,* and was in the bow of the boat, flew out of its socket as though drawn by an irresistible power, and the rope that held it was strained to breaking point. It seemed to tow us, as it grazed the surface of the water towards the shore.

"What's the matter?" cried William Guy. "Cut away, boatswain, cut away!" shouted West, "or we shall be dragged against the rocks."

Hurliguerly hurried to the bow of the *Paracuta* to cut away the rope. Of a sudden the knife he held was snatched out of his hand, the rope broke, and the grapnel, like a projectile, shot off in the direction of the sphinx. At the same moment, all the articles on board the boat that were made of iron or steel—cooking utensils, arms, Endicott's stove, our knives, which were torn from our pockets—took flight after a similar fashion in the same direction, while the boat, quickening its course, brought up against the beach.

What was happening? In order to explain these inexplicable things, were we not obliged to acknowledge that we had come into the region of those wonders which I attributed to the hallucinations of Arthur Pym?

No! These were physical facts which we had just witnessed, and not imaginary phenomena!

We had, however, no time for reflection, as immediately upon our landing, our attention was turned in another direction by the sight of a boat which was wrecked upon the sand.

"The *Halbrane's* boat!" cried Hurliguerly. It was indeed the boat which Hearne had stolen, and it was simply

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smashed to pieces; in a word, only the formless wreckage of a craft which has been flung against rocks by the sea, remained.

We observed immediately that all the ironwork of the boat had disappeared, down to the hinges of the rudder. Not one trace of the metal existed.

What could be the meaning of this?

A loud call from West brought us to a little strip of beach on the right of our stranded boat.

Three corpses lay upon the stony soil, that of Hearne, that of Martin Holt, and that of one of the Falklands men. Of the thirteen who had gone with the sealing-master, there remained only these three, who had evidently been dead some days.

What had become of the ten missing men? Had their bodies been carried out to sea? We searched all along the coast, into the creeks, and between the outlying rocks, but in vain. Nothing was to be found, no traces of a camp, not even the vestiges of a landing.

"Their boat," said William Guy, "must have been struck by a drifting iceberg. The rest of Hearne's companions have been drowned, and only these three bodies have come ashore, lifeless."

"But," asked the boatswain, "how is the state the boat is in to be explained?"

"And especially," added West, "the disappearance of all the iron?"

"Indeed," said I, "it looks as though every bit had been violently torn off."

Leaving the *Paracuta* in the charge of two men, we again took our way to the interior, in order to extend our search over a wider expanse.

As we were approaching the huge mound the mist cleared away, and the form stood out with greater distinctness. It was, as I have said, almost that of a sphinx, a dusky-hued sphinx, as though the matter which composed it had been oxidized by the inclemency of the polar climate.

And then a possibility flashed into my mind, an hypothesis which explained these astonishing phenomena.

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "a lodestone! that is it! A magnet with prodigious power of attraction!"

I was understood, and in an instant the final catastrophe,

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to which Hearne and his companions were victims, was explained with terrible clearness.

The Antarctic Sphinx was simply a colossal magnet. Under the influence of that magnet the iron bands of the *Halbrane's* boat had been torn out and projected as though by a catapult. This was the occult force that had irresistibly attracted everything made of iron on the *Paracuta*. And the boat itself would have shared the fate of the *Halbrane's* boat had a single bit of that metal been employed in its construction. Was it, then, the proximity of the magnetic pole that produced such effects?

At first we entertained this idea, but on reflection we rejected it. At the place where the magnetic meridians cross, the only phenomenon produced is the vertical position of the magnetic needle in two similar points of the terrestrial globe. This phenomenon, already proved by observations made on the spot, must be identical in the Antarctic regions.

Thus, then, there did exist a magnet of prodigious intensity in the zone of attraction which we had entered. Under our very eyes one of those surprising effects which had hitherto been classed among fables was actually produced.

The following appeared to me to be the true explanation. The Trade-winds bring a constant succession of clouds or mists in which immense quantities of electricity not completely exhausted by storms, are stored. Hence there exists a formidable accumulation of electric fluid at the poles, and it flows towards the land in a permanent stream.

From this cause come the northern and southern auroras, whose luminous splendors shine above the horizon, especially during the long polar night, and are visible even in the temperate zones when they attain their maximum of culmination.

These continuous currents at the poles, which bewilder our compasses, must possess an extraordinary influence. And it would suffice that a block of iron should be subjected to their action for it to be changed into a magnet of power proportioned to the intensity of the current, to the number of turns of the electric helix, and to the square root of the diameter of the block of magnetized iron. Thus, then, the bulk of the sphinx which upreared its

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mystic form upon this outer edge of the south might be calculated by thousands of cubic yards.

Now, in order that the current should circulate around it and make a magnet of it by induction, what was required? Nothing but a metallic lode, whose innumerable windings through the bowels of the soil should be connected subterraneously at the base of the block.

It seemed to me also that the place of this block ought to be in the magnetic axis, as a sort of gigantic calamite, from whence the imponderable fluid whose currents made an inexhaustible accumulator set up at the confines of the world should issue. Our compass could not have enabled us to determine whether the marvel before our eyes really was at the magnetic pole of the southern regions. All I can say is, that its needle staggered about, helpless and useless. And in fact the exact location of the Antarctic Sphinx mattered little in respect of the constitution of that artificial lodestone, and the manner in which the clouds and metallic lode supplied its attractive power.

In this very plausible fashion I was led to explain the phenomenon by instinct. It could not be doubted that we were in the vicinity of a magnet which produced these terrible but strictly natural effects by its attraction.

I communicated my idea to my companions, and they regarded this explanation as conclusive, in presence of the physical facts of which we were the actual witnesses.

"We shall incur no risk by going to the foot of the mound, I suppose," said Captain Len Guy.

"None," I replied.

"There—yes—there!"

I could not describe the impression those three words made upon us. Edgar Poe would have said that they were three cries from the depths of the under world. It was Dirk Peters who had spoken, and his body was stretched out in the direction of the sphinx, as though it had been turned to iron and was attracted by the magnet.

Then he sped swiftly towards the sphinx-like mound, and his companions followed him over rough ground strewn with volcanic remains of all sorts.

The monster grew larger as we neared it, but lost none of its mythological shape. Alone on that vast plain it produced a sense of awe. And—but this could only have

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been a delusion—we seemed to be drawn towards it by the force of its magnetic attraction.

On arriving at the base of the mound, we found there the various articles on which the magnet had exerted its power; arms, utensils, the grapnel of the *Paracuta,* all adhering to the sides of the monster. There also were the iron relics of the *Halbrane's* boat, all her utensils, arms, and fittings, even to the nails and the iron portions of the rudder.

There was no possibility of regaining possession of any of these things. Even had they not adhered to the lodestone rock at too great a height to be reached, they adhered to it too closely to be detached. Hurliguerly was infuriated by the impossibility of recovering his knife, which he recognized at fifty feet above his head, and cried as he shook his clenched fist at the imperturbable monster, "Thief of a sphinx!"

Of course the things which had belonged to the *Halbrane's* boat and the *Paracuta's* were the only articles that adorned the mighty sides of the lonely mystic form. Never had any ship reached such a latitude of the Antarctic Sea. Hearne and his accomplices, Captain Len Guy and his companions, were the first who had trodden this point of the southern continent. And any vessel that might have approached this colossal magnet must have incurred certain destruction. Our schooner must have perished, even as its boat had been dashed into a shapeless and hopeless wreck.

West now reminded us that it was imprudent to prolong our stay upon this Land of the Sphinx—a name to be retained. Time pressed, and a few days' delay would have entailed our wintering at the foot of the ice-barrier.

The order to return to the beach had just been given, when the voice of the half-breed was again heard, as he cried out: "There! There! There!"

We followed the sounds to the back of the monster's right paw, and we found Dirk Peters on his knees, with his hands stretched out before an almost naked corpse, which had been preserved intact by the cold of these regions, and was as rigid as iron. The head was bent, a white beard hung down to the waist, the nails of the feet and hands were like claws.

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How had this corpse been fixed to the side of the mound at six feet above the ground?

Across the body, held in place by its cross-belt, we saw the twisted barrel of a musket, half-eaten by rust.

"Pym—my poor Pym!" groaned Dirk Peters.

He tried to rise, that he might approach and kiss the ossified corpse. But his knees bent under him, a strangled sob seemed to rend his throat, with a terrible spasm his faithful heart broke, and the half-breed fell back—dead!

The story was easy to read. After their separation, the boat had carried Arthur Pym through these Antarctic regions! Like us, once he had passed beyond the south pole, he came into the zone of the monster! And there, while his boat was swept along on the northern current, he was seized by the magnetic fluid before he could get rid of the gun which was slung over his shoulder, and hurled against the fatal lodestone Sphinx of the Ice-realm.

Now the faithful half-breed rests under the clay of the Land of the Antarctic Mystery, by the side of his "poor Pym," that hero whose strange adventures found a chronicler no less strange in the great American poet!

CHAPTER XV

A LITTLE REMNANT

THAT same day, in the afternoon, the *Paracuta* departed from the coast of the Land of the Sphinx, which had lain to the west of us since the 21st of February.

By the death of Dirk Peters the number of the passengers was reduced to twelve. These were all who remained of the double crew of the two schooners, the first comprising thirty-eight men, the second, thirty-two; in all seventy souls. But let it not be forgotten that the voyage of the *Halbrane* had been undertaken in fulfillment of a duty to humanity, and four of the survivors of the *Jane* owed their rescue to it.

And now there remains but little to tell, and that little must be related as succinctly as possible. It is unnecessary to dwell upon our return voyage, which was favored by the constancy of the currents and the wind to their northern course. The last part of the voyage was indeed accom-

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plished amid great fatigue, suffering, and danger, but it ended in our safe deliverance from all these.

Firstly, a few days after our departure from the Land of the Sphinx, the sun set behind the western horizon to reappear no more for the whole winter. It was then in the midst of the semi-darkness of the austral night that the *Paracuta* pursued her monotonous course. True, the southern polar lights were frequently visible; but they were not the sun, that single orb of day which had illumined our horizons during the months of the Antarctic summer, and their capricious splendor could not replace his unchanging light. That long darkness of the poles shed a moral and physical influence on mortals which no one can elude, a gloomy and overwhelming impression almost impossible to resist.

Of all the *Paracuta's* passengers, the boatswain and Endicott only preserved their habitual good-humor; those two were equally insensible to the weariness and the peril of our voyage. I also except West, who was ever ready to face every eventuality, like a man who is always on the defensive. As for the two brothers Guy, their happiness in being restored to each other made them frequently oblivious of the anxieties and risks of the future.

Of Hurliguerly I cannot speak too highly. He proved himself a thoroughly good fellow, and it raised our drooping spirits to hear him repeat in his jolly voice:

"We shall get to port all right, my friends, be sure of that. And, if you only reckon things up, you will see that we have had more good luck than bad. Oh, yes, I know, there was the loss of our schooner! Poor *Halbrane,* carried up into the air like a balloon, then flung into the deep like an avalanche! But, on the other hand, there was the iceberg which brought us to the coast, and the Tsalal boat which brought us and Captain William Guy and his three companions together. And don't forget the current and the breeze that have pushed us on up to now, and will keep pushing us on, I'm sure of that. With so many trumps in our hand we cannot possibly lose the game. The only thing to be regretted is that we shall have to get ashore again in Australia or New Zealand, instead of casting anchor at the Kerguelens, near the quay of Christmas Harbor, in front of the Green Cormorant."

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For a week we pursued our course without deviation to east or west, and it was not until the 21st of March that the *Paracuta* lost sight of Halbrane Land, being carried towards the north by the current, while the coast-line of the continent, for such we are convinced it is, trended in a round curve to the northeast.

Although the waters of this portion of sea were still open, they carried a flotilla of icebergs or ice-fields. Hence arose serious difficulties and also dangers to navigation in the midst of the gloomy mists, when we had to maneuver between these moving masses, either to find passage or to prevent our little craft from being crushed like grain between the millstones.

Besides, Captain Len Guy could no longer ascertain his position either in latitude or longitude. The sun being absent, calculation by the position of the stars was too complicated, it was impossible to take altitudes, and the *Paracuta* abandoned herself to the action of the current, which invariably bore us northward, as the compass indicated. By keeping the reckoning of its medium speed, however, we concluded that on the 27th of March our boat was between the sixty-ninth and the sixty-eighth parallels, that is to say, some seventy miles only from the Antarctic Circle.

Ah! if no obstacle to the course of our perilous navigation had existed, if passage between this inner sea of the southern zone and the waters of the Pacific Ocean had been certain, the *Paracuta* might have reached the extreme limit of the austral seas in a few days. But a few hundred miles more to sail, and the iceberg-barrier would confront us with its immovable rampart, and unless a passage could be found, we should be obliged to go round it either by the east or by the west.

Once cleared indeed.

Ah! once cleared, we should be in a frail craft upon the terrible Pacific Ocean, at the period of the year when its tempests rage with redoubled fury and strong ships dread the might of its waves.

We were determined not to think of this. Heaven would come to our aid. We should be picked up by some ship. This the boatswain asserted confidently, and we were bound to believe the boatswain.

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For six entire days, until the 2d of April, the *Paracuta* held her course among the ice-barrier, whose crest was profiled at an altitude of between seven and eight hundred feet above the level of the sea. The extremities were not visible either on the east or the west, and if our boat did not find an open passage, we could not clear it. By a most fortunate chance a passage was found on the above-mentioned date, and attempted, amid a thousand risks.

At last we were in the South Pacific waters, but our boat had suffered severely in getting through, and it had sprung more than one leak. We were kept busy in baling out the water.

The breeze was gentle, the sea more calm than we could have hoped, and the real danger did not lie in the risks of navigation. No, it arose from the fact that not a ship was visible in these waters, not a whaler was to be seen on the fishing-grounds. At the beginning of April these places are forsaken, and we arrived some weeks too late.

We were fifteen hundred miles away from the nearest land, and winter was a month old! Hurliguerly himself was obliged to acknowledge that the last fortunate chance upon which he had counted had failed us.

On the 6th of April we were at the end of our resources; the sea began to threaten, the boat seemed likely to be swallowed up in the angry waves.

"A ship!" cried the boatswain, and on the instant we made out a vessel about four miles to the northeast beneath the mist which had suddenly risen.

Signals were made, signals were perceived; the ship lowered her largest boat and sent it to our rescue.

This ship was the *Tasman,* an American three-master, from Charlestown, where we were received with eager welcome and cordiality. The captain treated my companions as though they had been his own countrymen.

The *Tasman* had come from the Falkland Islands where the captain had learned that seven months previously the American schooner *Halbrane* had gone to the southern seas in search of the shipwrecked people of the *Jane.* But as the season advanced, the schooner not having reappeared, she was given up for lost in the Antarctic regions.

Thus terminated this adventurous and extraordinary expedition, which cost, alas, too many victims. Our final

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word is that although the chances and the necessities of our voyage carried us farther towards the south pole than those who preceded us, although we actually did pass beyond the axial point of the terrestrial globe, discoveries of great value still remain to be made in those waters!

Arthur Pym, the hero whom Edgar Poe has made so famous, has shown the way. It is for others to follow him, and to wrest the last Antarctic Mystery from the Sphinx of the Ice-realm.

THE END

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